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IRRATIONAL THEATRE

The Challenge Posed by the Plays of Howard Barker for Contemporary Performance Theory and Practice

Three Volumes

Volume 1. Bond and Barker - A Comparison

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SUMMARY

This study arose out of an awareness that contemporary performance theories and production techniques were not appropriate to the plays of Howard Barker. The first section, a comparison of Barker with Edward Bond, attempts to 'situate' the former with reference to a major dramatist of the seventies and early eighties. This reveals a number of significant differences, including almost diametrically opposed conceptions of the function of drama.

In the second section, I consider Barker against a wider background of deconstructive and postmodernist thinking. As opposed to Bond's Brechtian notion of a Rational theatre, I argue that Barker's theatre is irrational and suggest that irrational interaction is Seduction. Barker's plays are considered from the point of view of a theory of seduction - in particular Jean Baudrillard's. There follows a review of a range of discourses on performance by influential practitioners such as Stanislavsky. Although seduction is identifiable in all their practices, it is almost universally denied or shunned - except by Grotowski. Also the focus of acting technique is invariably on the actor/character relation with little consideration of interaction with others.

The third section considers in some detail two plays by Barker - JUDITH and THE CASTLE, analysing them from a seductive perspective.

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INTRODUCTION

My point of departure for this study lay with my perception of the inadequacy of contemporary performance theory to cope satisfactorily with the dramas of Howard Barker. This perception was based on my own experience of directing and acting in Barker plays as well as a wide acquaintanceship with major professional productions of his work. I felt somehow that the full dramatic potential especially of the later texts was not being realised in performance. On the other hand there was throughout the sixties, seventies and eighties, an unprecedented interest in and awareness of theatre as theatre. By this I mean that the theatrical performance was no longer seen as a simple 'fleshing out' of the dramatic text but rather as a craft in its own right quite separate from literary fiction and from film. This period witnessed the widespread dissemination of Theatre Studies in Universities and Colleges, while in schools drama was established as an independent subject within the curriculum. There was, consequently, a considerable new interest in theoretical approaches to performance. During the seventies, I was personally very much drawn to the dramas of Edward Bond. As a school teacher I was searching for playscripts suitable to stage with students which would at the same time be interesting and

challenging for me to direct. So my first real acquaintanceship with Bond was when I took THE NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH from a Foyles' bookshelf and skim-read it. This was very much my practice at the time: first a glance at the cast list - which ruled out most plays immediately; most others were returned to the shelf after a couple of pages of scene one. I read THE NARROW ROAD, however, in its entirety and decided there and then to stage it. I wonder now what attracted me to it? I had never seen or read a Bond play, though I had heard of Bond in connection with the SAVED and EARLY MORNING controversies. Apart from strictly practical considerations, there were three things in the main, I feel, which recommended Bond's text to me: firstly there was the literary quality of the writing. The text was poetic without being rarefied or 'versified' (like Fry) but at the same time had a certain colloquial force. Bond seemed to juxtapose speech from registers which had hitherto existed in hermetically sealed worlds the very clash of which created a kind of unique music rarely found outside Shakespeare. Secondly, the play was full of dramatic incident, vivid, 'theatrical' characters and fascinating visual images which offered good opportunities for a youthful and physical ensemble. Thirdly, the play seemed to evade all the conventional processes of definition - tragedy? comedy? farce? caricature characters? It didn't fit the established slots but seemed to unwind along a trajectory defined solely by its own unique and secret inner necessity: that seemed to me to be a good thing. Staging the play served only to increase my interest in and respect for Bond as a dramatist. I read all of his plays and attended as many professional productions of his work as I could. A production

of LEAR by the RSC in The Other Place at Stratford provided one of the most dramatically powerful and aesthetically rich theatrical experiences I had ever witnessed. Bond seemed at his peak to have attained a complete technical mastery to complement his creative imagination. During this period, Bond was engaged not merely in writing plays but also in setting out his political and social views and relating these to his crusade for a 'Rational Theatre'. This latter coincided fairly closely with the aims of Brecht whose approach to performance enjoyed a certain 'radical' vogue in Britain during the seventies and eighties. During the seventies, I could not really see how there could be any substantial case against a theatre dedicated to a clear sense of social, moral and (consequently) political purpose. I found myself broadly in sympathy with Bond's views.

Also during the seventies, I became interested in the plays of Howard Barker who tended to be grouped with a generation of radical, 'political' dramatists of a post-war generation younger than Bond - people like Brenton or Hare. Having produced some of Barker's work, it became clear to me that he was a very different sort of writer from Bond. Especially as Bond defined further his conception of a Rational Theatre. These were not merely differences of style but profound divergences about the role of theatre. Bond was in tune with a particular strand of the received thinking of his times and pushed this line of thought to an extreme - effectively isolating himself in the process. Barker was also increasingly at odds with the current theatrical climate(directors) of 70s

and 80s but in an entirely different way. He appeared to be pursuing a more classical and perhaps conservative aesthetic - though his plays did not demonstrate the 'accessibility' that such an approach might suggest; on the contrary they became increasingly 'difficult.' There is a sense now that directors have very little idea of how to 'cope' with these texts. I think this is in no small measure owing to the lack of any kind of theoretical basis on which to proceed with them. My starting point for this exploration was the problem - the challenge - that Barker's plays posed to contemporary performance theory. I therefore decided initally to examine Barker in conjunction with a comparable writer whose work has, in my opinion, been successfully staged - Edward Bond. I felt that such an exercise offered a number of significant parallels and contrasts which would be useful in initially 'situating' Barker's dramaturgy within the context of contemporary British theatre.

While working on this study, I have been fortunate in being permitted to observe rehearsals of professional productions of Barker's plays. It was at one of these - during the RSC's work on THE BITE OF THE NIGHT, that I devised the strategy which informs the second section of this study. The director, Danny Boyle, was having difficulty working on some scenes in the third act and I noticed that a consistent pattern was emerging. A scene would be built up - logically with a pattern of clear and consistent motivations; at a certain point, however, an action would occur which violently broke with the foregoing 'rationale'; discussion between actors and director yielded no more than that

this was an 'irrational' moment. Whereupon the action was proceeded with along the same lines as before i.e. every effort was made to put the previous 'logic' back together again. Nobody found this particularly satisfactory, the resultant dramatic structure providing a basic pattern of rationality with a few odd and isolated instances of the 'irrational'.

This gave me the idea of reversing the procedure: instead of working through the scene and elucidating it with an a priori set of 'rational' assumptions, what would happen if one started with the 'irrational' moment? if, instead of treating it as a relatively obscure aberration, one posited it as the key to everything else? What if - as Heidegger might have put it - one chose to 'dwell' in the irrational moment, making that one's theoretical base? How does one theorise the irrational? It was this chain of thought that led me to seduction. Clearly, it would be Quixotic to hope to discover a coherent 'logic' in seduction but it might nevertheless exhibit characteristic processes which could be described; after all, science has theorised chaos.

In Section Two, I advance certain theoretical postulates relevant to seduction - for which I am particularly indebted to the writings of Jean Baudrillard. Apart from applying these to Barker's texts, I have widened the discussion to a general consideration of orthodox performance theories and techniques, using the concept of seduction to establish a critical distance.

Finally, in Section Three, I have analysed two plays - JUDITH and THE CASTLE - in considerable detail and from a seductive viewpoint.

CHAPTER ONE: Beginnings

In this section, I intend to compare Howard Barker's dramatic writing with that of Edward Bond. This is by way of an introduction to the main concern of this study which focusses on the challenge Barker's work poses for those involved in performance - a challenge which - on the whole and for a variety of reasons - has not been met. It is my contention that Barker writes a radically different sort of play to the kind those establishments which attempt to foster new drama have come to expect and demand. This difference, I believe, extends from the content and style of the plays themselves to the very role of the drama in a democratic society; regarding this latter, Barker has himself felt it necessary to explain his position in 'Arguments for a Theatre'.[1] Such a comparison - in no way aiming to be exhaustive - will hopefully justify itself in helping to 'place' Barker with reference to a major figure in the British theatre of the seventies and eighties. In particular, Bond's pronouncements on drama achieved a considerable currency and came to coalesce around the concept of a 'Rational Theatre', developed principally along Brechtian lines. In considering these dramatists, I shall start by comparing their early work, going on to examine the progression in Bond's thinking while reserving a fuller consideration of Barker for sections two and three.

In fact many common features suggest just such a comparison. Both writers have shown themselves unusually stubborn in refusing compromise and have fought tenaciously to maintain what they see as their artistic integrity in the face of pressures from hugely powerful and monopolistic institutions to shape their work. Most professional dramatic writers earn their living from the broadcasting media where they are restricted on the whole to writing to the specific requirements of various 'slots': the duration will be specified, the style will be realistic/naturalistic, the content must show a strong and clear narrative impulse with characters who are easily identifiable etc. This 'shaping', however, also obtains in theatre where institutions such as the English Stage Company, the Royal Shakespeare Company or the National Theatre regularly require writers - especially young or relatively unknown ones - to amend or completely alter their work. Bond and Barker have both made stands in this respect and resisted pressure to be more accessible or acceptable; as a result of this, their work has tended to be marginalised, considering its artistic significance - comparatively rarely performed (usually only in studios or small-scale productions) and been banished almost entirely from large auditoria or television.[2]

I applied the concept of 'artistic integrity' to both quite deliberately. Bond and Barker consider themselves as heirs to the classical European literary-dramatic tradition and see their own work in that context. In this respect they find themselves in opposition to a number of tendencies in contemporary cultural thinking: firstly, the notion of quality in the arts has been seriously questioned. Whereas at one time the value of experiencing Shakespeare as

opposed to a television soap would not have been seriously challenged, 'high' art is no longer seen as being inherently superior to popular culture. Alternatively, criticism may focus its judgement on the moral and social values the work is seen as purveying or even on the creator's ablity to make the 'message' accessible. As a consequence, public readiness to wrestle with the 'difficult' work has correspondingly diminished. Secondly, there has been a similar questioning of the value of dramatic 'literature' in the theatre and a far greater emphasis on the traditions, skills and technicalities of performance. In this context, the writer is no longer seen as the 'genius' who produces the sacred 'masterpiece' - as Stanislavsky saw Chekhov - with director, designer and players as 'servants of the play'; on the contrary, the written dialogue becomes merely one element in the combination which goes to make up the 'theatrical text' and is as malleable or dispensible as any other. Artaud's call for 'No More Masterpieces' has met with a degree of approval.

By the time Barker started writing in the late sixties, Bond had established a reputation which extended well beyond the relatively small circle of those interested in contemporary drama. This was because of the controversy generated by SAVED(Royal Court 1965) and the ensuing campaign against the censorship exercised by the Lord Chamberlain. In this dispute, Bond's work was championed by William Gaskill in his capacity as Artistic Director of the Royal Court. Bond's evolution as a writer had been closely linked to the Court: he had been a member of the Writers Group and, was much influenced by its guiding spirits - Keith Johnstone and Gaskill. This influence is immediately obvious in Bond's preference for austere settings, minimal but highly significant props and highly

'composed' stage pictures, - a very sharp awareness of the juxtapositioning of the verbal and the visual image with the visual frequently dominant. Arguably, the whole of Bond's output reflects the 'schooling' he received in his early days at the Court:

> *The Royal Court has been a very important place for me.....The Court had the resources(or at least pretended it had) of a major European theatre - it didn't have the money but it certainly had the actors, designers and directors...This was a very fortunate thing for writers because it meant their work was subjected to the greatest scrutiny and pressure during production, and so they learnt to write to a certain standard...*[3]

Barker, on the contrary, began by working in isolation from the direct influence of performance:

> *How directly were you involved with the productions of the early plays?*
>
> *Nothing like as closely as I wanted to be. By which I don't mean I was excluded. I was for a long time bedazzled and bewildered. There was the grotesque problem of seeing theatre as other people's property. It made me feel very alienated. And there was this very particular style and regime at the Royal Court which was unwelcoming. You were dealt the impression that it was a great privilege being there. I didn't know what the writer's function at rehearsals was, so I sat very quietly at the back and watched while Bill Gaskill directed the play and was thrilled by it in the event.*[4]

Perhaps the most distinctive quality about Bond's work lay in the portrayal of violence which - Bond argued - was embedded within contemporary social structures: the overt ferocity of the vandal, the delinquent and the criminal were merely pathetic reflections or feeble protests against the covert institutionalised brutality of the bourgeoisie.

> *You good, decent, honest, upright, lawful men who believe in order - when the last man dies, you will have killed him! I have lived with murderers and thugs, there are limits to their greed and violence, but you decent, honest men devour the earth.*[5]

This argument was first advanced by Bond himself in the preface to SAVED where he states that the notorious baby-stoning episode was symbolic of the violence which society inflicted upon the innocent child. The other complementary argument - sociological this time and construing the play more literally - asserts that the violence of this scene is the end-product of the institutionalised social violence - against which the drama testifies; in this case, the play fits into a tradition of 'telling it how it is' social realism. In his preface, Bond argues that the delinquent murder of a particular child is negligible compared to the atrocities of which society is capable in actions such as the Allied bombing of Dresden in World War II. The play is to be understood both on a naturalistic/realistic level and as symbolic.

This attempt to occupy the moral high ground can, however, be seen as a direct response to the 'moral' outrage which SAVED provoked: it simply points the

finger back at the play's accusers. The evangelical atmosphere of the debate especially amongst the play's defenders is evident in the tone of reviews:

> *What a brilliant play SAVED is, how well it has stood the test of time! Bond has succeeded in making the inarticulate, in their very inability to express themselves, become transparent before our eyes: their very speechlessness is made to yield communication, we can look right inside their narrow, confined, limited and pathetic emotional world....SAVED is a deeply moral play: the scene of the stoning of the baby, which led to the first outcry about it, is one of the key points in its moral structure...There could not be a more graphic illustration of the way in which lack of responsibility and lack of understanding, lack of intellectual and moral intelligence, lies at the root of the brutality of our age.*[6]

This controversy was,I believe, crucial in shaping general critical attitudes to Bond's work, - particularly because Bond himself seems to have been profoundly influenced by the debate. Firstly, he accepted the 'moralised' critical framework with all that this entailed and, secondly, he began, as I have indicated above, to insist upon particular 'readings' of his work; the exercise of authorial authority can have an overwhelming influence upon the hermeneutics of his oeuvre, serving to discourage alternative readings - especially sympathetic ones. Bond has appended a series of prefaces to his published plays which provide rigid interpretative guidelines;[7] in later work, this straightforwardly didactic element found its way into the performance text.[8] Apart from the charge of staging revolting atrocities in order to provide vicarious perverted thrills, Bond was also accused of pessimism; he painted a very dark picture of

society without providing any positive counterbalance or viable alternative. With regard to SAVED, Bond repudiated this by arguing that the final scene where Len mends the chair provides a positive image which symbolises the 'naturally good'[9] essence of his character. However, in later work, he seems to have accepted this criticism by identifying the need to write 'answer' plays:

> *Asked why solutions are not offered in the play, Bond replied:*
>
> > *I know at that time I had no way of stating it clearly. My life was actually very like the one shown in this play. I was very surprised when people were upset about it. I say the play stands in its own right. It does. It doesn't do everything and obviously one has got to write other plays which do some of the other things.'*[10]

By 1977, Bond was stating clearly how the concept of the 'answer' play with its implied 'message' had become fundamental to his dramaturgy:

> *I'm now going to write a series of plays which I will call 'answer plays', in which I would like to say: I have stated the problems as clearly as I can - now let's try and look at what answers are applicable.'*[11]

Apart from the issue of violence, one of the other aspects referred to by Esslin is the 'speechlessness' of the characters. In fact the dialogue in Bond's SAVED maintains a regime of strict economy which at times only just stops short of self-parody. This from the infanticide episode:

MIKE: Got it!

PETE: Give it a punch.

MIKE: Yeh less!

COLIN: There's no one about!

(PETE punches it)

Ugh! Mind yer don't 'urt it.

MIKE: Yer can't.

BARRY: Not at that age.

MIKE: Course yer can't, no feelin's.

PETE: Like animals.

MIKE: 'It it again.

COLIN: I can't see!

BARRY: 'Arder.

PETE: Yeh.

BARRY: Like that!

(He hits it) [12]

In SAVED, this kind of exchange - relatively monosyllabic - is clearly a consciously employed stylistic device. Scene 1 of the play is fairly typical - the average length of line comprises 4.2 words; only two words in the entire scene exceed two syllables. The effect of this stichomythia is to submerge individual identity within a group - and more specifically within a group interaction; characters talk in the same way and in rapid succession. Scenes are dominated by incident: the murder of the baby cannot be attributed to any specific individual - it arises out of the situation as 'atavistic fury'[13] overwhelms the group. The final scene - involving four characters in a domestic interior - contains a single line of four words in three pages of detailed stage directions; language has become altogether redundant.

When Barker went to see SAVED in 1969, it was in anticipation of viewing a 'realistic' play about the South London working class - a social group with which, by birth and upbringing, he identified himself:

SAVED was one of the first plays I ever saw in the theatre - and I myself was not a writer then. So I suppose that seeing the life of

my own class and background could be represented on the stage made me want to write a play - and, perhaps, write it better. I do remember feeling that Bond's presentation of the South London Working class was abominable and contemptuous. The inarticulacy, the grunting and the monosyllabics, being accepted as a portrayal of working class people did offend me and may have inspired me to write CHEEK which did lend articulacy to the characters. Laurie is quite adept verbally. So it could be seen as a reaction to the sterility of Bond's language.'[14]

The attempt to link the action of the play with a broader sociological analysis - highlighted in Gaskill's 1969 production through the projection of 'images of affluence and horror' - he found unconvincing:

I remember being irritated by a number of things in that production. I remember that Gaskill intercut the scenes by flashing up advertisements; that there had to be a relation between a commercially exploitative society and the depravity of those kids struck me as - not so. I couldn't connect with that connection. Though I was stimulated by seeing a theatre about people I was supposed to know, I wasn't moved to imitate it.'[15]

Martin Esslin also found the use of the captions inappropriate, but it is interesting to note correspondences between Barker's and the critic's reactions. Esslin confirms the awareness of inarticulacy but for him:

> *...their very speechlessness is made to yield communication, we can look right inside their narrow, confined, limited and pathetic emotional world.'*[16]

It can be seen how what to Esslin appears as a revelation to excite pity, could be viewed from another angle as a patronising and distorted pandering to middle-class voyeurism. (From a different perspective, the critic Harold Hobson has always reacted to Bond's depiction of working class characters in the same way as Barker; most notably in his SUNDAY TIMES review of THE FOOL which Esslin angrily reproduced in THEATRE QUARTERLY.[17]) For Barker, articulacy is paramount within his work; most of his characters are articulate and certainly none evoke the kind of patronising response which Esslin expresses; all possess the capacity to subvert audience expectations, to surprise, delight and disgust. CHEEK(1970) was deliberately written as a Royal Court 'first play'. This becomes particularly obvious when it is compared to the rest of Barker's plays: it is unique in dealing with a contemporary, domestic, working-class situation in a style which is the closest Barker ever comes to naturalism. He had already written a radio play - ONE AFTERNOON ON THE NORTH FACE OF THE 63RD LEVEL OF THE PYRAMID OF CHEOPS THE GREAT(1970) - which was very much fantasy. It is arguable that the Court's expectations about the nature of first plays has encouraged a corresponding conformity which has limited the imaginative scope of their young proteges; there is an assumption that talent emerges in the form of searingly frank and 'truthful' descriptions of the domestic and social life of the suffering classes.

For what such generalisations are worth, CHEEK, as a portrayal of working class youth, is perhaps somewhat more 'realistic' than SAVED. Bond's youths drift from public scenes revelling in an ethos which glorifies violence and brutality to domestic scenes of vegetative torpor - too stupid even to envisage any possible alternative to the life they lead. In contrast, Barker's characters all have strategies; the central figure, Laurie, is as cynical as anyone in SAVED with ambitions focussed on sex and money. He is 'realistic', however, about how such aims are to be achieved:

> *LAURIE: I'm not incapable of working for a month or two. We'll make the repayments out of the rent. You see, the thing to do is to get hold of some bleeding great Victorian house and let it out to students and immigrants. They live anywhere, don't they? Don't bother to tell me it's not allowed under the mortgage, I know that, but who's going to know? You have to use your imagination, if everyone stuck to the rules, there wouldn't be half the millionaires there are today. Rules are made to be broken.*[18]

Barker has said of Laurie and his friend, Bill, -

> *I tried to write what for me seemed a naturalistic portrait of a pair of typical and intelligent working-class kids whose first instinct is to imitate rather than rebel, although they don't at first recognise the difference.*[19]

The 'cheek' of the title refers to the hero's confident articulacy which he employs to exploit and manipulate. Throughout the play his verbal pyrotechnics keep his quieter and apparently less assertive friend in subjection but Laurie receives a shock when Bill is successful in developing a sexual liaison with his mother. A typical pattern in Barker's plays - verbal brilliancy, at the end of the day, often fails pretty miserably while more humbly pedestrian types take the prizes; the witty Hacker in THE LOVE OF A GOOD MAN refers - with some justification - to his diligent foreman, Clout, as 'a fucking parrot' and is stunned when 'the worm turns' and he has to make Clout a partner in the business. The foreman has been carrying around the contract his boss is forced to sign for some time: his silence under insult and abuse was not dumb pathos - it was strategy. In VICTORY, the banker, Hambro, tolerates Charles II's sarcasms and mockery because he knows that it is he and not the monarch who wields ultimate power. Perhaps most startling of all is the case of the prostitute Trellis in CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES: she remains dumb throughout the first half of the play despite friendly overtures and blatant provocation, but after the revolution in which her eruption into articulacy plays a crucial part, her vocal presence dominates; she becomes - to use her own phrase - 'a rough old shouter'. Correspondingly the silver-tongued magician, Toplis, whose agitations have brought the mutiny about finds that Trellis's fumbling but dignified sincerity renders his witty polemics redundant: in a crucial debate on economics, he is unable to prevail against her. This final example also serves to indicate that in Barker's plays articulacy is by no means undifferentiated and is not to be solely associated with polysyllabics- which is what tends to pass for 'the power to express oneself.' It is in articulation above all that Barker expresses

the ability of his characters to respond creatively to the situations in which they find themselves:

> *..in my plays everyone always knows that intervention is possible and they call up forces within themselves which often fail but nevertheless respond creatively.*[20]

The theatre of inarticulacy is an interesting phenomenon with a lengthy history in England; usually it is comic, inviting audiences to laugh at limited powers of expression. In Shakespeare, a whole series of clowns make themselves ridiculous by employing malapropism, solecism, non-sequiturs and generally talking pompous nonsense; the ultimate in inarticulacy is probably the tapster, Francis, in HENRY IV Part 1 whose speech consists of 'anon, anon.' In the post-war theatre, Pinter's drama leans heavily on the deficient speech of the characters to create many of his effects - their failure to express is almost always an issue. In the case of Mike Leigh, in plays like ABIGAIL'S PARTY, the inarticulacy becomes garrulous; the characters talk persistently but say nothing. Their utterance is pure neurotic behaviourism and renders them transparent. Bond's dialogue in SAVED (also in the earlier POPE'S WEDDING) conforms more to the laconic Pinter mould. In all cases the inarticulacy of the characters reflects entrapment in their situations - they are doomed to futile repetitions and escape routes are blocked by pernicious chunks of ideology which have been absorbed unchallenged and acquired the status of self-evident truths. The most extreme examples of inarticulate theatre are to be found in the work of the contemporary German dramatist, Franz Xaver Kroetz; the patterns in his work are consistent with those identified above - characters lack individuality, paralysed in situations

where they are overwhelmed by violent incident - abortions, murders, perverted sexual acts.

Indeed, the whole issue of speech is closely related to the way character is conceived. One of the Brechtian notions which has achieved a considerable currency is the view that characters are products of social circumstance and biological determinism. It is therefore not surprising that this lack of freedom should be reflected in their speech and the concept of an empowered subject should be rejected. This is certainly the case with Bond:

> *The idea that a character produces himself is the Shakespearean idea and I don't think it's true.*[21]

> *Actors have to understand not only their part but also its contribution to the social situation depicted by the scene. The overall coherence of the scene is paramount. Since the stress is upon the scene's total effect, the presentation of an individual and emotional sub-text as performance is a distortion.....*[22]

> *Many of Bond's ideas on acting are similar to those of Brecht. Since their interpretations of society are similar in some respects, it is hardly surprising. Bond's views on the job of the actor at this stage are a consequence his of seeing the world in a way that Brecht would have agreed with. Thus: 'The problem is always to make actors interpret roles as social roles or social functions, to ask not 'Who am I?' but 'What am I?',*

not 'Who does this action?' but 'What is this action?', to define themselves in relation to other characters, to consider the nature of the action rather than the nature of the self.[23]

This shift of focus away from subjectivity to an objectified human animal defined in terms of social class, ideology and biology is often seen as an essential element of Marxist dramaturgy which contradicts bourgeois drama's exaltation of the individual. Apart from the risk of simply repressing personal emotion, this emphasis does have significant implications for the role of speech within such a theatre; it means that speech must subordinate itself to the action and just as the action is rendered transparent (and therefore comprehensible) - so similarly speech. Classical tragedy, conversely, insists on the precedence of the speech act over physical action: the play's totality is not consumed in the communication of the hero/heroine's destruction, but rather speech challenges and attempts to cope with catastrophe. In Greek tragedy, particularly,the concrete opacity of poetry overwhelms an action rendered the more insubstantial in that it takes place offstage. Even in Shakespeare people spend a lot more time talking about things than physically doing. The championers of inarticulacy argue that western theatre has been plagued by 'garrulity'.[24] yet not only does this theatre of 'deficient speech' tend to come accompanied by elaborate critical discourse but - more importantly - it privileges institutionalised forms of discourse such as biology and sociology which - as I will argue later - a radical poetics will seek to challenge or subvert.

Barker has always seen linguistic potency as lying at the heart of his mission and has consequently laid particular stress upon the voice of the actor:

> *Because they try to debase language, the voice of the actor becomes an instrument for revolt.*
>
> *The actor is both the greatest resource of freedom and the subtlest instrument of repression.*
>
> *If language is restored to the actor he ruptures the imaginative blockade of the culture. If he speaks banality he piles up servitude.*[25]

As Barker's work has developed, this emphasis on language has extended beyond ariculacy to the espousal of a poetically dense speech; critics have referred frequently to the texture of his dialogue:

> *..I was reminded of Cocteau's definition of theatrical poetry as something that should not be light and flimsy but 'thick like the rigging of a ship and visible at a distance.'*[26]
>
> *Unlike most of his contemporaries, who use language as if it is an invention of the autocue, Mr Barker wields English as if it is a pigment, physical, sensual texture as well as - sometimes - sense..*[27]

As the second of these comments implies, Barker's use of language has proved one of the more controversial aspects of his work which has won only a grudging and limited acceptance by critics.

Although, like Kroetz, Bond has felt it necessary to develop beyond the dramaturgy of inarticulacy, his presentation of the individual - and particularly the working class individual has remained fairly consistent. The characterisation of the honest servant Bob Acres in RESTORATION (Royal Court 1981) is certainly contemptuous - especially since his stupid, doglike devotion is thoroughly abused by the contrastingly wicked and attractive Lord Are. However, Bond himself has spoken of the need to avoid presenting working class types as simply inarticulate and feels that THE WORLDS (Newcastle University 1979) represents an attempt to solve this problem. It is not unfair to say, however, that the inarticulate speech of a particular set of Bond characters in the plays which followed SAVED continued to define them quite sharply as 'lower class'.

In other respects, they demonstrate a radical stylistic departure from the quasi- social realism of both SAVED and THE POPE'S WEDDING (Royal Court 1962). EARLY MORNING (Royal Court 1968) established a pattern of mixing historical/mythical characters with fantasy which was to be continued in THE NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH (Coventry Belgrade 1968), LEAR (Royal Court 1971), BINGO (Exeter Northcott 1973), THE FOOL (Royal Court 1975) and THE WOMAN (National Theatre 1978). If, however, one takes into account the sort of play Bond was

writing before THE POPE'S WEDDING - specifically the unpublished ROLLER COASTER and KLAXON IN ATREUS' PLACE, it becomes apparent that Bond's personal inclination from the beginning seemed to lie in the direction of fantasy; so EARLY MORNING was not so much a departure as a return and with SAVED and THE POPE'S WEDDING, Bond was doing precisely what Barker did with CHEEK - writing drama consonant with the Royal Court's house style. Of all Bond's plays, EARLY MORNING is the most fantastical and represents a degree of imaginative freedom which he has never displayed since; the writer himself has referred to it as 'my freedom play'.[28]

One feature of the play which is of particular interest with relevance to Barker is the use of caricature. Figures such as Queen Victoria, Florence Nightingale, Prince Albert etc are presented behaving in a way entirely inconsistent with the respectable conventional image. The fact that these characters indulge in cynical intrigues referring anachronistically to the paraphernalia of contemporary political life suggests that the play is satirising the British establishment - a view which the inclusion of the Lord Chamberlain himself does much to confirm. A claim commonly advanced by apologists for the play is that it demonstrates the extent to which contemporary Britain is still in the grip of outdated and 'irrational' Victorian values. I find it difficult to accept the general validity of this. In the first place, the play functions through bizarre disjunctions, subversions and travesties of historical and social 'realities', - a process which tends to remove one from those 'realities' rather than refer one back to them with fresh eyes; it serves no purpose whatsoever to bear in mind the 'historical' Victoria, Florence Nightingale, Gladstone etc - to

do so, in fact, can be a positive distraction. The basis of Bond's caricatures are the popular mythologised entities of junior school education and 'Scouting For Boys' which persisted even into post- World War II pedagogy; these are violently uprooted from their uniquely stable and highly moralised context and deposited in an alien and insane world of naked, internecine family power struggles reminiscent of the more lurid passages of Suetonius or Procopius. If Bond's main concern had lain with satire then all this would, in its extremity, have been somewhat wide of the mark.

It seems to me that the core issues lie elsewhere, centring on the sympathetically portrayed character of Arthur and his quest for a moral or rational response to a world of monstrosities. He finds himself in a dilemma from the outset: his father, Prince Albert, tries to enlist his support for a coup against Victoria. While the latter is manifestly tyrannical, it is by no means evident that Albert with his dreams of empire is any better - particularly considering the brutal way he intends to seize power with his ally, Disraeli:

> *ALBERT: It's my sons. Not George - when we kill Victoria he'll come to heel, he's just her tool - it's Arthur. I want him to join us.*
>
> *DISRAELI: I hoped he would. He's heir after Prince George. It would have given our coup the appearance of legality. But there's no more time.*

ALBERT: I'll talk to him.

DISRAELI: Again?

ALBERT: Tonight. I'll tell him about the engagement. That'll shock him.

DISRAELI: All right, but tomorrow I start secret mobilization. Tonight I'll bring the black list up to date. I was going to shoot them - to demonstrate our military support, you understand. But I've decided on hanging - that will emphasize our respectability. I'll keep the numbers down.

ALBERT: How many?

DISRAELI: We don't know all our enemies till we start. So far, eight hundred and thirteen.

ALBERT: Make it fourteen. People are superstitious. (Looks off. Loudly) I shouldn't be surprised if it doesn't rain.[29]

The engagement referred to here is Victoria's plan, publicly announced in Scene 3, of boosting the sagging popularity of her regime by marrying her heir, George, to Florence Nightingale. This represents a crisis for Arthur because he is George's siamese twin and objects to the match. The device of the twins is highly significant; though George, as a character is weak, it is this very conformity which suggests Bond is using the image to reflect the divided

personality: on the one hand the socially moulded conformist(George) and on the other the alienated, uneasy conscience(Arthur). Apart from Florence, Arthur is the only character in the play who shows any genuine concern for the sufferings of others; it is therefore clear, as a number of commentators have suggested, that he represents the moral framework of the play with the other characters being seen through his eyes. In the farcical picnic scene in Windsor Park when the bungled coup takes place, Arthur attempts to stop his parents from killing each other - succeeding in saving his mother though not in preventing her from poisoning and strangling Albert. In Scene Four, the first of three 'trial' scenes in the play, Victoria is seen judging a criminal case. This is the first time we see any of her subjects, the people in whose name the politicians claim to rule. A couple are accused of killing and eating a man who pushed into a cinema queue. At the time, Len, age 18, and his girlfriend, Joyce, age 50, were waiting to see a pornographic film. Even though their guilt is obvious and not denied, the trial is a travesty of proper legal procedure. Victoria wishes to proceed directly to sentencing but when Arthur objects to the lack of any defence, she retaliates by ordering him to defend them. Arthur sets about this by attempting to discover why the killing took place but his efforts only succeed in annoying the accused:

> *LEN: ... I done it! Thass that! Get, mate, get! They're 'is! 'Is! I got a right a be guilty same as you!*[30]

This scene prompts a number of conclusions about the world of EARLY MORNING. The function of government seems to be the imposition of some sort of order upon a populace the ultimate expression of whose depravity lies in their basic

inclination to prey upon and eat each other on the slightest pretext. Apart from Arthur, nobody seems to find this state of affairs truly objectionable, the trial serving not so much to administer justice as to satisfy public prurience:

> *MENNINGS: This trial should be a real jazz. Is it true the woman's a lot older than him?*
>
> *CHAMBERLAIN: Yes.*
>
> *MENNINGS: You can't get tickets. The black market's sold out.*[31]

It is clear from Len's comments cited above that this is a barbarous chaos in which even the victims collude. Florence, having been raped by Queen Victoria, finds that she has 'evil thoughts', comes to terms with life and tortures the masochistic Lord Mennings:

> *FLORENCE: Give me that. (He hands her his drink. She takes off her shoe and pours the drink into it)*
>
> *MENNINGS: (On his knees) I knew it! (He kisses the shoe on her other foot) Governess!*
>
> *FLORENCE: You dare touch me before you've earned permission! I own all the shoes in the world!*
>
> *MENNINGS: I'm evil.*

FLORENCE: Don't make excuses. You're a grovelling little pervert. I'll cauterize your lips where they touched me.

MENNINGS: Oh shoe-boss![32]

This provides yet another example of the moral confusion which faces Arthur - the victim not merely colluding but positively revelling in his own pain and degradation. Later, in Scene 8, George, who has been wounded in the coup attempt, dies; in Scene 10, at Arthur's insistence, Victoria brings him back to life. George, however, is angry at being returned to 'this misery', giving Arthur to understand that death is preferable to life. George kills himself:

GEORGE: (Dying) Yes, I remember... We weren't joined together there, we were free... when you die you'll be... free and happy... when you die. (Dies)[33]

Under such circumstances, what is the right thing to do?

In Scene eleven, accompanied only by George's skeleton and a deranged doctor, Arthur thinks things through to a logical conclusion. If death is preferable to life, why don't people simply kill themselves?

ARTHUR: ... But you see, they don't just hate their own life - they hate life itself. It's a matter of conscience, like duty in the blood:

they stay alive to kill. They can't die in peace till they've seen the world dead first.[34]

On the basis of this, those traditionally reviled as mass murderers - like Hitler - become heroic and virtuous figures. Arthur decides on a genocidal plan which will kill everyone involved in the civil war: he persuades Victoria to participate with her forces in a tug of war on the cliff at Beachy Head; at a given signal, Victoria's side will let go the rope sending Arthur's team backwards over the cliff; what Victoria does not know is that Arthur has calculated the extermination of her forces too - a calculation based on his view of human nature:

ARTHUR: ... When my men go over the side what will hers do? What can you trust them to do? What would you expect them to do? What's the natural thing, the normal thing, the human thing to do? Run to the edge and watch the others die. Her whole army will stand along the edge. That's why I chose it. It's weak, it'll give, and her men will fall down on top of my men and they'll all be killed, both lots together.[35]

Having killed everyone(except, fortuitously, Florence Nightingale), Arthur kills himself; his final moments of moral ecstasy, however, are poisoned by the appearance of ghosts - unfree in that they seem to be joined together - in particular the ghost of George materialises and rejoins himself to Arthur.

The final section of the play, beginning with Scene 16, is set in Heaven. Arthur awakens to find all the other characters; he is joined to George but is assured that he will be separated after his trial. This formality is to establish whether the newly-dead are guilty enough to be admitted; Victoria feels that Arthur is assured of entry because of the mass murder: what she does not know is Arthur's altruistic motivation for the action. He is ordered to be tested by ordeal which involves Albert thrusting a sword through him. The fact that he does not appear to feel pain allows for him to be found guilty by the court. There is, however, a doubt:

> *VICTORIA: (Sniffs) Do I smell burning?*[36]

Once admitted Arthur is welcomed to heavenly happiness by being offered a severed leg to eat. In Heaven, people eat each other; there is no problem with this:

> *VICTORIA: It doesn't hurt.*
>
> *ALBERT: And it grows again.*
>
> *GEORGE: Like crabs.*
>
> *VICTORIA: Nothing has any consequences here - so there's no pain. Think of it - no pain! Bon appetit. (She sniffs suspiciously) I could have sworn I smelt burning.*[37]

As the others happily chase off in pursuit of human meat, Victoria's suspicions are confirmed: alone on stage, Arthur hesitates indefinitely before the human meat in his hands:

> *ARTHUR: I'm not dead. O God, let me die.*[38]

Through a device of inverting normal moral values, Bond makes his 'moral' character, Arthur, morally inferior to all the other happy cannibals. In heaven, he is a leper, a kill-joy, spreading his misery amongst the others. He tries to hide himself away but his condition comes to light because George writhes around in hunger.(Because Arthur's entry to heaven was invalid, so was the subsequent separation from his brother. Bond is in this, as in everything, ruthlessly consistent.) Finally in spite of his attempts to participate in the cannibalism, Arthur involuntarily infects the mob with his unhappiness:

> *VICTORIA: ... The mob protects him. He's infected them with his lunacy - they <u>all</u> think they're in pain. He's their messiah.*[39]

Victoria finally comes up with a scheme to neutralise the effect Arthur is having:

> *VICTORIA: We could eat him again. Keep his bones, and chew off every sign of life the moment it appears.*[40]

As with much of the imagery in the Heaven section of the play, this strikes interesting resonances from Christian doctrine and ritual. Prompted by George,

they decide to use Florence Nightingale to lure Arthur away from the protection of the mob.

Florence Nightingale is a character who, though apparently a caricature, moves towards something much more rounded and subtle. Initially she is selected by Victoria as a suitable match for George. In spite of the arranged nature of this transaction, she admits to loving him:

> *FLORENCE: I was eleven when it happened. You were going down the street in a big carriage. You wore a sailor suit. You looked very... clean and kind and lonely. I prayed for you. I dream about you... I'm sorry.*[41]

She is, however, brutally raped by Victoria - an event which seems, as I have already indicated, to destroy her innocence and leave her as corrupt as all the others. This rape is most important dramatically. David Hirst, in his book, EDWARD BOND,[42] argues that:

> *We should not be misled by the stage direction 'distraught' which prefaces this into thinking there is any attempt here to present a naturalistic reaction to rape. Rather Bond is alerting us to the intensity of Florence's change. The rape is of her mind and ideas, the sexual reference a metaphor for the corrupting force of Victorian ethics.*[43]

He goes on to suggest that Bond's 'restraint' here - by which he means the perpetration of the rape offstage - allows him 'greater flexibility' in 'handling Florence's subsequent metamorphoses'. Hirst seems to wish to play down the shocking physical reality of the rape thereby reducing its power to disturb (in much the same way as the 'metaphor' argument was used to soften the baby-stoning episode in SAVED.) I think this detracts from the essential substance of the drama. Though the rape occurs offstage, we see Florence dragged out protesting; while Victoria's family carry on talking onstage, we hear her cry out twice - firstly to George, then:

FLORENCE: (Off) O! [44]

Depending on how this is done, the effect can be quite shocking to an audience - all the more so in that they will probably have been laughing at the preceding trial of Len and Joyce. Barker makes a similarly abrupt transition in CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES in Act 2 Scene 5 when Eddie Music drags the be-skirted T.E. Pain offstage to rape him in an otherwise farcical episode where the latter finds himself involuntarily acting the part of a woman. The violence inflicted on Florence is akin to the babystoning episode in SAVED not only in terms of its physical horror but also, metaphorically, in that it symbolises the (temporary) extinction of Florence's humanity. Bond makes the logic of her position crystal clear at the beginning of the next scene:

FLORENCE: (Distraught) I'm changed. Queen Victoria raped me. I never dreamed that would happen. George will know. I'll disgust him... I've

started to have evil thoughts. Her legs are covered in shiny black hairs.[45]

In the previous scene, Florence confessed to dreaming of George but now she feels that she is no longer worthy of her previous ideal; this explains her subsequent behaviour in acquiescing to the relationship with Victoria: even though she does continue to demonstrate a lingering concern for George, she sees him now as being hopelessly beyond her reach. However, when George dies after being revived by his mother, Florence cries out that she has 'nothing to live for'. By this time, Florence is playing the grotesque caricature role of John Brown for Victoria's benefit. In Scene 12, when Arthur comes to make his tug of war proposition to Victoria with the skeleton of George on his shoulder, Florence is personally hanging supposed 'traitors'. There are indications that the balance of power in the lesbian relationship is beginning to tilt in Florence's direction: she is refusing to play John Brown any more. A crucial moment comes just as Arthur is about to leave:

ARTHUR: ...(Suddenly, to Florence) Why are you staring at him? Didn't you like him?

FLORENCE: Yes.

ARTHUR: (Hesitates) He always talks about you. It's irritating. (He goes out)[46]

Immediately after this, Florence asserts that she must go to the front to treat the dying. Victoria pleads desperately and unsuccessfully with her to stay, providing a unique glimpse of a more vulnerable side to her otherwise adamantine personality.

The following scene is perhaps one of the most shocking in the play, showing Florence performing her angel of mercy role in a hospital ward of fatally wounded men:

> *NED: ... But she don't let her in till yer're down for dyin'.*
>
> *GRISS: What a way t'go.*
>
> *NED: I'm 16, but I'll die 'appy...*
>
> *NED: ... I got a lot a give thanks for. If I was 'ome I'd still be developin' the muscles in me right wrist. 'Ere I've 'ad more 'ole than the ol' fella ever 'ad off the ol' lady, an' they're celebratin' their silver bunk-up.*[47]

Commentators who view the play from the fundamentally political orientation of Bond's later work point to this scene as demonstrating how the corrupt state requires the prostitution of sexuality in the interests of maintaining its war machine. As in Scene 4, the tone is mainly farcical with the chirpy drummer boy, Ned, rigging in his own favour the drawing of lots for the first to enjoy

Florence's attentions. Again, as with Scene 4, this mood is punctured in the final moments:

> *(JONES lowers the lamp as FLORENCE goes to NED. She stands by him. The light is almost out. She goes back to JONES)*
>
> *FLORENCE: Give me the lamp. (He gives her the lamp. She turns it full up and goes back to NED. She looks at him) He's dead...*
>
> *(Silence)*
>
> *GRISS: Stroll on...*
>
> *JONES: The silly little... 'Ow many times I told 'im take it easy?*
>
> *FLORENCE: I'll tell the men to -*
>
> *JONES: No. Let 'im be. 'E's all right for a bit. It's cold in the corridor.*[46]

The process of lowering the lamp, the pauses as Florence goes, stands, returns for the lamp, the silence after the announcement all serve to create a sense of mystery and shock. Jones's final line strikes a note of tenderness strangely poignant in the relentlessly savage landscape of this play. The linking of sexual ecstasy with death seems consonant with Arthur's current notion of death as being desirable and there appears to be no particular disillusionment amongst

the fatally wounded in this ward with Ned, especially, expressing his preference for the life of war to the home life. Florence's role, far from being degraded, seems to have an almost sacramental quality about it(she comments on Ned as 'the purest person I know' with 'most of the virtues of Christ and none of his vices); even when bringing death, she remains 'an angel of mercy'. It is almost as if she had recovered in this use of her sexuality the purity she lost when Victoria raped her.

Florence, having survived Arthur's massacre, arrives in heaven later than the others. She explains that she continued to earn a living as a prostitute:

> *FLORENCE: I was in bed with Disraeli and Gladstone. They always shared a booking... Suddenly, Gladys(a nom d'amour) said 'Listen'. There was a newsboy shouting in the street. Mafekin had been relieved. That on top of the rest was too much. They got over excited - and here I am.*[49]

Again, Bond seems to be making a connection between sexual ecstasy and death, with Florence's sexual sanctity confirmed by martyrdom. When Arthur first encountered Florence as his brother's prospective bride, his hostility to her was noticeably softened by her physical presence; thus George's conviction that Arthur loves Florence leads to her being used in the final 'Heaven' section of the play to lure him away from the protection of the mob. The encounter between these two central characters - extended over Scenes 19 and 20 is the climax of

the play. A key to what happens here can be found in a brief section of dialogue between Victoria and Florence in Scene 18:

> *VICTORIA: If there's pain in heaven, why isn't there love? (After reflection) I can't say I love you. D'you love me?*
>
> *FLORENCE: No.*
>
> *VICTORIA: D'you feel pain?*
>
> *FLORENCE: No.*
>
> *VICTORIA: Nor do I. Nor does the mob. Crowds believe anything.*[50]

Bond seems to be suggesting here a necessary relationship between love and pain. The abolition of pain in heaven has solved the earthly problem of cruel and predatory behaviour - which was the suffering it caused. The removal of pain, however, also seems to entail the removal of the possibility of love.

When Florence talks with Arthur, she begins by trying to dismiss his pain as illusory but is impressed by his suffering. The fact that he does suffer means that, unlike the others, he is aging. The importance of Bond's stage directions - a number of which I have drawn attention to already - is emphasised here:

> *FLORENCE: George thinks you like me. (A long pause)*

ARTHUR: Why did you come?

FLORENCE: I'm not sure.

ARTHUR: I'm going to ask you something...[51]

Florence challenges Arthur, the long pause indicating the truth of George's assertion. However, Arthur also takes this time to think and he responds to Florence with another challenge, sensing that she has an ulterior motive. Her response indicates that the encounter has set her adrift: she could have admitted that she is being used to trap him. He realises that she is open to influence and asks her not to eat: presumably encouraged by his aging, he is convinced that they can go somewhere else. He has arrived at some important conclusions:

ARTHUR: Most people die before they reach their teens. Most die when they're still babies or little children. A few reach fourteen or fifteen. Hardly anyone lives on into their twenties.

FLORENCE: Thank God.

ARTHUR: Bodies are supposed to die and souls go on living. That's not true. Souls die first and bodies live. They wander round like ghosts, they bump into each other, haunt each other.[52]

This idea is useful in understanding the first part of the play: grotesques like Victoria, Albert, Disraeli, Len, Joyce etc are ab initio soulless creatures, the walking dead. As for being 'alive', Arthur tells Florence that she sustains his life. This a surprising announcement both for Florence and the audience as there is little that would have led them to anticipate this, - Arthur's main concerns appearing to have lain elsewhere. At this moment, Victoria and the other royals rush in and proceed to strangle Arthur - much to Florence's distress. In the following scene, Arthur has just been eaten except for the head which Florence is attempting to hide under her dress. He tells her that for the first time he is happy and feels only truly alive without his body:

> *ARTHUR: I want to tell you something. When they cut off a man's leg he still feels it. I'm like that. They've cut off my body - but I'm alive. I could make love to you. Now. I can feel it. Hard. That's why I like it in your lap.*[53]

When Florence asks him what she can do, he orders her not to eat. In a thoroughly farcical episode, the others track the head down but as the ever-ravenous George eats it Arthur laughs.

In the final scene of the play, it is discovered that Arthur's body has grown again but it is dead. Victoria secures it in a coffin, using her teeth as nails. Social harmony is restored as the mob come and picnic on the lid of the coffin.

VICTORIA: I'll miss him. But he's better gone. I could never help him, otherwise things would have been different. I'm working out a roster for the order in which we're eaten then. There'll be no arguments. My name comes first.[54]

Unseen by them, Arthur materialises out of the coffin and levitates above them. The only note of disharmony is Florence who weeps silently on one side.

The play has thrown up considerable difficulties in the process of production - most notably in Gaskill's premieres - the disastrous critics-only performance in April 1968 and the 'Bond Season' of 1969. After SAVED and THE POPE'S WEDDING, EARLY MORNING came as a sizable shock to Gaskill. On the one hand he recognised no problems with regard to the playing:

I never thought it made directorial problems in the way of how to work with the actors, or for that matter how to design it. I never thought that was difficult because I think you could say that the style was surrealist and one of the essences of surrealism is that you use realism quite consciously. It's the juxtaposition of elements in it which is startling. I don't think the play calls for any sort of stylisation in the playing or really in the staging. If you do it realistically then it has the quality of a dream, because things happen in a rather matter of fact way, but the things that happen that are written down, the events which happen, the dialogue people

say, are not realistic, but if you don't treat it realistically you don't create the dream quality.[55]

Gaskill's justification here for 'using realism' - while it may have a theoretical appeal - is not generally borne out by surrealist practice - Artaud, for one, explicitly rejecting all forms of realism. Gaskill's intention seems to have been to make the play 'work' by creating and exploiting an artistic tension between his imposed 'style' and Bond's 'content'. This rather than bring out the dramatic values immanent in the text itself - a text with which he was far from happy:

Gaskill, however, had doubts about the clarity of the story....In both the 1968 and 1969 productions, cuts were made. Scenes 7 and 8 were reversed, with Bond's reluctant agreement, because Gaskill felt the audience needed a clearer line to follow... At one stage in rehearsal, Gaskill cut scene ten (the Bagshot scene):'I couldn't analyse what is happening there, what symbolically is being presented'..it is the case that there are aspects of the play which he found extraordinarily difficult to make clear to an audience.[56]

The director, Jane Howell, who played Joyce in Gaskill's 1968 production, clearly did not think that a consistently realistic style was appropriate to this play:

I did see two rehearsals when it was nearly cracked... and in those two rehearsals the actors were very tired and there was a lot of pressure. They started playing it rather fast and nervously, and it started to become farcical, and it was very funny and very fast, and

> *you didn't have time to think because you were laughing too much... A wonderful play but it has to be done like high-class Whitehall farce*[57]

In considering EARLY MORNING, one aspect I have not dwelt upon is the farce - an exaggeratedly comic action which, of course, has the effect of confirming the characters as caricatures. Unlike the 'serious' action, these passages tend to be self-evident in the text. The problem with cartoon-style farce, is that the characters become distanced, - two-dimensional - and therefore not fully empathised with by the audience; the concentration on swift and frequently mechanical action means that motives and emotions are not given space in which to make a full impact or be subjected to sensitive assessment. The consequence of establishing consistently comic expectations in an audience tends to produce - according to Bergson - 'anaesthesia of the heart'[58]. There is a great deal of farce in EARLY MORNING but it is very important to observe the switches of mood and pace which the action requires. Often Bond's stage directions indicate these transitions - the use of pauses and silences as cited above being examples. What does not work, however, is the imposition of a single, consistent 'style' based on easily-identifiable theatrical genres. 'Consistency', like 'clarity', has been one of the sine qua nons of the kind of 'rational' theatre espoused by Gaskill and the Royal Court. Yet writers like Bond and Barker have produced work which has defied audience expectations with abrupt switches of dramatic genre; with Barker this sort of formal experimentation has been habitual.

EARLY MORNING certainly is a 'difficult' text and Gaskill's assumption that the play posed no questions concerning directorial or acting style was perceived at the time as being wrong:

> *In William Gaskill's present production the scenery and costumes are more elaborate and force one to see the play in their terms. And their terms are far too naturalistic, far too genuinely historical, and indeed far too sober; they therefore again and again inhibit the play from taking off into its own region, that of high, extravagant, childish fantasy.*[59]

Gaskill's approach remained consistent with the production values of the deficient speech style of SAVED. Not only did he demand a clear narrative line but he also had to have an interpretation of the text to be 'clarified' to the audience. As I suggested earlier and will consider in greater depth later,the process of interpretation usually involves validation through an appeal to existing privileged discourses such as psychology or narrative stereotypes (like the Oedipus myth in SAVED). Bond, himself, has protested against this demand for explanations:

> *(Explanations of the play)..come later, and are helpful. But they don't substitute for the <u>theatrical</u> learning (and I don't just say theatrical experience)....when I told the directors they had to tell the story I meant in terms of theatre....the play works not by falling under a weight of symbolism and psychology, but by telling the theatrical story of the play in terms of theatre...*[60]

There is, by definition, no external criterion for validating such theatre, other than the spontaneous awareness that 'it works'. Gaskill was never particularly happy with Bond's departure from naturalism/realism and latterly ceased to produce his work. In the case of EARLY MORNING, his chief complaint was of this very stylistic inconsistency:

> *The only thing about EARLY MORNING is that I don't think the supernatural elements are always quite consistent in the way that they should be in a fairy story.....*[61]

In its own terms, however, I have suggested that the action of the play develops quite 'logically'. In EARLY MORNING, Bond was perhaps writing the kind of play that Barker meant when he called (much later) for a theatre of moral speculation.[62] Although the moral framework is Arthur, he is confused; given the world of the play, his decision to massacre as many people as possible, is a quite logical response to the apparently insatiable human appetite for violence, pain and death. Thereafter, Bond uses 'heaven' as an experimental basis for further moral hypothesizing. In the end, Arthur, as an individual, seems to attain both love and happiness through a painful self-control and denial of the physical body - with strong Christian overtones. As a whole, however, the play is sufficiently ambiguous to leave the audience to formulate their own responses. Most fundamentally, Arthur relies throughout not on ideology or socially accepted norms but on his own deepest instincts and his capacity to reason: this is essential to what Barker has described as his own 'Theatre of Catastrophe':

> *The Theatre of Catastrophe is rooted in the idea of the soul, not as immortal form, not as a thing immune from damage, but as innate knowledge of other life. In some, this knowledge is nothing more than a cherished hoard of stereotypes (the sea, the sky, the prospect of love). In others, the Soul breaks with all images it senses corrupt or annexed by ideology (harmony, family, the public) and aspires to new forms.*[63]

What is alien to Barker's method is Bond's scenario of a central protagonist facing the problem of a 'world' as he or she sees and experiences it without encountering an equivalent degree of contradiction from any of the other characters. In this respect, crucial passages of Bond's action come when the protagonist works something out in isolation or expounds a view to a more or less passive audience.

As stated previously, EARLY MORNING uses caricature but the style required by the play is not simple satirical farce. Barker too has always found the satirical impulse very strong:

> *CHEEK was a Royal Court apprentice play par excellence and NO-ONE WAS SAVED is not dissimilar - neither of them political plays. After that I then wrote a short play about Edward Heath called EDWARD,THE FINAL DAYS and when I did that I got back to a kind of satirical writing that I used to produce as a schoolboy.*[64]

This involved the use of caricature at its most simple and straightforward level:

> *They express particular viewpoints but without complexity. I placed the characters in EDWARD,THE FINAL DAYS squarely in their social context, but only as subjects of lampoon, because I hated them and was offended by them. I am still deeply offended by society, and still hate as much, but the habit is no longer iconoclastic, as it was automatically then....In that period I was further from any feeling of involvement with my characters than at any time before or since. I began to feel that being involved with my characters at all was a weakness.*[65]

Barker's satirical writing, however, was not merely grounded in instinct. Some of the rationale behind his position is to be found in NO END OF BLAME (Oxford Playhouse 1981). The central character of the play is a Hungarian artist, Bela Veracek, who has deliberately turned his back on conventional 'art' and opted to express himself through the medium of the visual counterpart of the stage satire, - the political cartoon:

> *I am a cartoonist. I believe the cartoon to be the lowest form of art. I also believe it to be the most important form of art. I decided in my twenty-fourth year I would rather be important than great. I decided this because I have always preferred shouting to whispering and humanity more than myself. The cartoon is a weapon in the struggle of peoples. It is a liberating instrument. It is brief like*

life. It is not about me. It is about us. Important art is about us. Great art is about me. I am not interested in me. I am not sure if I like us either, but that is private and the cartoon is not private. We share the cartoon as we cannot share the painting. We plunder painting for the private meaning. The cartoon has only one meaning. When the cartoon lies it shows at once. When the painting lies it can deceive for centuries. The cartoon is celebrated in a million homes. The painting is worshipped in a gallery. The cartoon changes the world. The painting changes the artist. I long to change the world. I hate the world.[66]

Bela's cartoons are clear and unambiguous in a way that 'art' is not. However, his media aren't merely pen and ink but, more importantly, the whole paraphernalia of printing presses and mass-circulation journalism. When Bela's work threatens to become effective, he is silenced. In the Soviet Union of the thirties, he finds he has become a state propagandist; in post-war Britain, he degenerates into a harmless eccentric, a 'visionary', producing increasingly exaggerated and grotesque panoramas of nuclear destruction which, ironically, are treated as 'art'.

Barker's EDWARD (Open Space 1972) was followed by ALPHA ALPHA (Open Space 1972) and - most notably - CLAW (Open Space 1975). This latter was significant because in it Barker shifted decisively away from satire in the play's celebrated final scene. The action traces the rise and fall of a working class youth from a background of deprivation. Noel Biledew is born, the illegitimate son of Mrs

Biledew, a munitions worker, while her husband languishes in a German POW camp. When Biledew returns home his anger at this unanticipated 'son' is compounded by the fact that he has meanwhile been rendered sexually impotent through a violent encounter with the boot of a camp guard. Biledew, a brooding idealist, is presented as inflexibly and intensely 'moral' in the cause of communism. Mrs Biledew, on the contrary, is thoroughly pragmatic and prepared to brush aside moral scruples when these might conflict with her own material comfort or social advancement. Accordingly, when the infant Noel returns home from school with thirty coronation mugs which have been traded for 'a look' at Joan Preston 'behind the lavatories', maternal disgust rapidly gives way to approbation and his enterprise is compared favourably to his unemployed father's torpor. To an extent, Noel's subsequent career can be seen as his attempt to reconcile the conflicting imperatives of this genealogy - on the one hand Biledew's moralised class loyalty/class hatred and Mrs Biledew's amoral selfish pragmatism.

Apart from this, Noel's bad eyesight makes him an object of hatred and derision:

> *NOEL: I'm used to being hated. From the first day I went to the infants school they had it in for me. Because of these. (He touches his glasses).*[67]

> *NOEL: Serve who? The sods who hid my glasses so I wandered round the playground with my hands outstretched, calling out 'Boss eyes' and 'Blind git' and making me fall on my face?*[68]

His personal response to a cruel world is hatred and a desire for vengeance. Thus Barker's central character, while sharing the wound of a physical handicap with Bond's Arthur, is not presented like the latter as transcending(or repressing) his own personal emotions in the interests of universal justice: this posture belongs to his father, Biledew, - and Barker explores this type more fully in the character of Gocher in FAIR SLAUGHTER; (though it is worth noting that neither of Barker's 'idealists' wholly succeeds in transcending hatred.) Noel is, therefore, in no way morally privileged within the world of the play. Quite the opposite.

He follows up his coronation mug success by embarking on a career as a pimp with his first employee being a fellow comrade in the Young Communist League. The way he secures Nora's services is typical of a series of crucial moments in which Noel creates himself and his life. He persuades her - appealing to her desire for a better life while simultaneously neutralising the moral taboo by presenting prostitution as a form of class war:

> *NOEL: This is political action! (She stops, her back to him) This isn't theory. This isn't arguing the toss for the millioneth time in the Battersea cell of the world revolutionary party. This is action, this is carrying anthrax into their woolly nests.*
>
> *(Pause. She turns, looks at him for some seconds.)*
>
> *NORA: And what's my share?*

NOEL: Halves.

NORA: No.

(Pause)

NOEL: All right. 60 - 40.

(She grins)

NORA: Rip their soiled knickers down!

NOEL: Hero of Labour!

NORA: How do we start?

NOEL: Right here. Tonight. Start small and local, then spread our wings.

NORA: There aren't any bourgeois in this street.

NOEL: Of course not. This is just for the experience.

(She takes a deep breath)

NORA: All right.

NOEL: First geezer comes along, I proposition him.[65]

What happens here is typical of a process which, I will argue later, lies at the heart of Barker's dramatic method. Noel's proposal, contravening as it does the moral taboo, provokes initially simple outrage. Persuasion, however, arouses curiosity and the proposal becomes a challenge. When Nora takes up Noel's challenge, both are exhilarated through accepting the notion of transgression and proceed to escalate theory into action. In the event, Noel has to face the challenge of importuning a policeman(the 'first geezer') and though in strictly material terms he comes out a net loser, he is both rich in experience and launched in his career. It becomes clear, however, as the play progresses that Noel's success in in selling Nora the idea of prostitution as class war was no mere cynical casuistry deployed solely for immediate material gain: in convincing Nora, he has, simultaneously, convinced himself. He rejects his communist father's posture of a fruitless but 'moral' political defiance and attempts to achieve the private satisfaction of undermining the hated establishment from within; eventually he rises to the dizzy heights of supplying prostitutes to the Home Secretary. This provides the ideal opportunity in Act Two for the bulk of the play's savagely humorous political satire.

However, the moment Noel Biledew becomes a real threat he is detained in a mental hospital and liquidated; his murder comprises the third act of the play. Of this scene, Barker has said:

I knew when I'd written CLAW...that I'd made a definite advance, largely because of the third act, which I regarded as a triumph. It was almost a new form for me: in prose with very long speeches - even longer to begin with than they are in the final text.

There was a withdrawal from the action on my part, too: it is less insistent. Nothing in the act relies on the shared assumptions that I have expected audiences to respond to in other acts. It was the beginning of a confidence to remove myself from a common ground. I dislike a play in which the dramatist overstates his intentions, making matters easy for his audience.. It produces this rather unhealthy expectation that we should all know what it's about by the interval. To continually undermine the expected is the only way to alter people's perceptions. Act 3 of CLAW does this superbly, but other plays also attempt to defy an audience, to force it to struggle a little.[70]

Act 2 ends confrontationally with Claw,(Noel's self-assigned name/identity), wrestling psychologically and physically with Clapcott, the Home Secretary, as a special branch officer armed with a machine gun bursts in through the window. Act 3 is set in 'an institution' where breakfast is about to be served to a single diner. Two waiters with white jackets and napkins address the audience in turn with lengthy monologues of reminiscence which gradually reveal that one is an ex-terrorist, the other a redundant hangman. Both are phlegmatically psychopathic. Claw enters in 'a battered grey suit' and is served breakfast.Their impassivity and casual conversation about the sexual proclivities of various pop

singers contrasts with Claw's desperate desire to live. In this extremity the hero summons up the despised figure of his father now dying in the geriatric ward of a hospital 'in the stench of urine and terminal flesh'. After a moving colloquy in which father and son show tenderness for the only time, Old Biledew advises Noel to -

> *Win them with your common suffering. Find the eloquence of Lenin, lick their cruelty away...Don't despise them, win them Noel!...Be cogent, earn their love-*[71]

then leaves him alone with his gaolers. After a pause, the son follows this advice in a speech of some sixty lines which accumulate an enormous emotional charge. At the end-'Noel is worn out, drained. There is a long silence..' Then the executioners slowly begin preparations. A bath is lowered in, Noel strips completely, steps into the vessel ..'With a single thrust Lily and Lusby force his head beneath the water.' The play ends ironically with Clapcott reassuring the House that the death of 'the patient Noel Biledew at the Spencer Park Mental Institution' was 'accidental and in no way reflects upon the capacities and dedication of the staff'. This final note reverting to the predominantly satirical vein of Act Two.

In reviewing the play, John Ashford said:

> *The third act opens with an even more extreme stylistic jolt than the second.*[72]

The playwright, David Edgar -

> *Nor is it easy to think of a series of images that says so much in so little time as those in the last half hour of Howard Barker's CLAW...The ending of CLAW is a series of shocks, reliant on the audience's ignorance of what is going to happen.*[73]

The critic, Harold Hobson, -

> *..Noel's desperation in the last act as he waits to know what is to be done to him in the inexplicable place to which he has been brought is very impressive: and in the slow, quiet, interlaced reveries of the two men (Peter Adair and Rod Beacham) who are with him throughout this act there is the awful tension of the Dead March in 'Saul'. This third act is the outstanding achievement of an outstanding play.*[74]

The act is a technical tour de force. The long soliloquy of Lily(ex-terrorist) at the beginning of the scene drains away any residual element of the comic cartoon style which has preceded; it is naturalistic and the audience are compelled to listen attentively and to deduce from Lily's words who he is and what he's doing in the play. They are weaned away from expectations of hectic action. Lily's tone is one of friendly reminiscence and invites a degree of intimacy. We become aware of his religious belief, his pleasure in the 'sunshine of the morning', his teetotalism, his failed marriage, his fond relationship with his mother and finally his addiction to killing. His present role as waiter in an institution seems paradoxical in the light of his words; we want to know how he

has come to be there. At this point, his monologue is broken off when Noel enters. In spite of serving the latter his breakfast, the kind of intimacy we have experienced is with-held from Noel - a silence which poses questions. The eating of food upon stage is a significant theatrical action - here fruit juice, bacon and eggs, and tea; this consumption is physical - and, in itself, real. By extension it serves to emphasise the reality of the character and - further - the situation, acting as a device to alter our focus on Noel rapidly and economically; cartoon characters aren't substantial in this way. It also has sacramental implications.

While Noel eats, Lusby begins his reminiscence - a nostalgic account of the execution of Gunter Podola in Wandsworth Prison at which he was an assistant to the hangman. The contrast and the link between the two 'waiters' becomes clearer and it is noticeable how each has relished contact with his intended victims immediately prior to death. At the same time tension is accumulated in the silence of the two non-speaking characters. Each individual seems to exist in a world of his own. The first contact which could be seen as remotely amiable comes at the end of Lusby's first soliloquy:

> *Pause of ten seconds. NOEL finishes his breakfast and with a napkin wipes his mouth. He doesn't move. LILY takes a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and extends it to LUSBY, who takes one, at arm's length without moving. They light their own with lighters. A pause of about ten seconds.*[75]

While Lily proceeds with an account of his capture by the army, Noel sits in silence. Apart from the increasing feeling of menace, the leisurely monologues also serve to convey the oppressive tedium of institutional life. When Noel first speaks he is 'tense and desperate', - a startling contrast to his two gaolers, and his speech is a plea for help, an expression of his feelings of impotence and terror; here Barker makes use of a device which he frequently employs to create powerful effects swiftly - the cry:

> *(Long pause. Then with a cry of despair) My home! My ordinary nothingness! I would fall down on the grass and kiss it no matter how many dogs had shit on it....*[76]

When Noel finishes this speech, there is a pause of ten seconds before Lusby resumes his reminiscence; long pauses like this punctuate all of the monologues in this scene, emphasising the absence of communication on stage and the oppressive atmosphere. The gaolers' final monologues explain how each was recruited to form 'a handpicked team to deal with a special category of criminals'.

The menace of the scene is intensified when Lily - after a fifteen second pause - bursts out singing snatches of 'Hungry for Love'(he described earlier how the tune 'My Guy' kept intruding into his thoughts as he executed a restaurant bombing.) There follows the only real conversation between the two gaolers; Lily undermines Lusby's pleasure in a television performance of the singer Lulu by asserting that she was a prostitute. This dialogue - superficially otiose -

conceals an undertow of casual animosity between the two men. During this exchange, Noel dramatically demands to know whether they are going to kill him; neither looks at him and Lusby exits to bring Noel's morning coffee and biscuits. His first attempt to make contact with them is ignored and his gesture of knocking the tea tray on the floor appears futile when it is calmly absorbed in routine. Desperate, Noel calls on his father who delivers his 'testament' and suggests that his son tries to persuade his gaolers. The contrast between father and son has always been that Old Biledew - in spite of his sufferings - has faith in humanity:

> *I am in St Francis' hospital, forty of us, in the stench of urine and terminal flesh....and sometimes, over the sound of clattering pans...we hear children in the park...*[77]

In his extremity, Noel clutches at this straw. Barker's stage directions read:

> *(This speech must begin clumsily and brokenly. By the end it is eloquent and delivered with conviction. It is the significant transformation of the play.)*[78]

For the audience, who know Lily and Lusby, Noel's task appears hopeless but the quality of this speech is such that by the end there should be real suspense as to its effect on the two men. Noel transforms himself and has possibly transformed his situation. After a long expressionless pause, their decision is signalled by Lily's switching on of his transistor which is playing 'Hungry for

Love'. The horror of the execution is emphasised in the details of the stage directions:

> *(Lily and Lusby rise to their feet and roll up their sleeves. After some time, Noel begins slowly to undress, removing first his jacket, then his shirt, then trousers, shoes, socks, and finally pants, he goes slowly to the bath and climbs in. With a single thrust, Lily and Lusby force his head beneath the water.)*[78]

The theatrical impact of Noel's stripping, apart from its symbolic aptness, is a powerful device which reinforces the tragic intensity of this moment; we are a million miles from the style of Act One with its cartoon knockabout, yet Barker has managed successfully to link these two apparently incompatible extremes and forge an artistic whole with a unique integrity of its own. Such was the 'definite advance' which Barker felt he had made in this scene:

> *When I wrote CLAW, I was vaguely aware that I was getting on a helter-skelter of satire and I wasn't being at all engaged with my characters. It was only with CLAW that I managed to drag myself back from what might have been a fatal precipice. The last act which I still think is rather a fine piece of writing surmounts and overcomes the satirical emphasis of the previous two acts. So I was led off and recovered. (Laughs)*[80]

Retrospectively it is possible to see how the satirical impulse leading to the development of a style employing rhetoric, exaggeration and the grotesque ultimately helped Barker to forge his own style of fantasy in which the satirical element has now all but disappeared:

> *The time for satire is ended. Nothing can be satirised in the authoritarian state. It is culture reduced to playing the spoons. The stockbroker laughs and the satirist plays the spoons.*[81]

> *The sense of caricature has been increasingly marginal, has been located in minor characters. In the centre of the plays complexity and contradiction have replaced it. Partly this reflects moves away from class stereotypes.*[82]

Although Barker may no longer write intending caricature, his characters are by no means 'natural' in the conventional sense - nor have they proved accessible to straightforward naturalistic or realistic acting techniques. Critics aware of his political attitudes and early work often assumed that satire was still the overriding aim; in this respect of course, the plays are found wanting:

> *His weakness as a satirist lies in his disdain of the rapier of factual argument and the frozen needle of contempt. He prefers the blunderbuss, and fires it off in all directions, like a drunk who cannot see his target.*[83]

The 'factual argument' is missing because Barker wishes to write fantasy and there is no 'contempt' because he is in fact involved emotionally with his so-called 'grotesques'[84]. The plays make demands upon audiences and actors alike, but if one begins by assuming that the main drift is satirical then incomprehension is inevitable. The same could be said for for the grotesques and grotesqueries of EARLY MORNING.

The incident of Noel Biledew attempting persuasion in an apparently hopeless situation both exemplifies and symbolises a shift in Barker's interest; it evinces several preoccupations to which he was to return repeatedly in later plays. Firstly, there is the catastrophic scenario:

> *Under ordinary circumstances character remains unexplored, - unexposed; the nerves are quite concealed. But in order to force that exposure on the characters, I always set them within catastrophic situations. The characters on stage are not simply in unlikely situations but usually disastrous ones....I'm attracted to those circumstances because at times like that people are disorderly. They cease to be the predictable product of social forces - not simply workers or bourgeois or rentiers; they are dislocated from those classic roles by the social struggle.*[85]

Secondly, there is the individual attempt to produce an alteration in the apparently inevitable - solely through speech; Noel's effort is mirrored in the climactic confrontation of STRIPWELL(Royal Court 1975): in CLAW a working-class

rebel pleads with establishment assassins, - Stripwell, high court judge and pillar of the establishment begs life at the hands of an anarchic criminal who is about to shoot him. In FAIR SLAUGHTER(Royal Court 1977), the plot of the play turns upon the prisoner, Old Gocher, succeeding in persuading the gaoler, Leary, to help him escape. In CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES(Essex University 1983), the magician and rabble-rouser, Toplis, recounts how he persuaded guards to let him escape from custody the night before he was due to be executed for desertion: two successful permutations of Claw's dilemma. In THE POWER OF THE DOG, Ilona tries desperately to persuade Stalin to spare her lover, the corrupt Sorge. There are numerous similar instances. At a more profound level, Barker seems fascinated by the power of language to effect the social event and the individual. This exploratory impulse tends to supersede simple polemic and STRIPWELL, premiered in the same year as CLAW, left critics who had found the latter play 'legible' as political satire, confused as to where Barker's sympathies lay.[86]

Compared with EARLY MORNING, CLAW is a much more conventional play and posed fewer problems with regard to production; Barker deploys a strong narrative which builds upon and uses suspense; the line of argument and focus are clear; true - there is a considerable stylistic dislocation but this is clearly signalled and absorbed by the strength of the narrative. EARLY MORNING defies expectation so constantly that there is a tendency for audiences to drift from moment to moment in a kind of daze - especially in the second-half 'heaven' scenes. Bond has said:

> *A more relaxed writer might have got three plays out of EARLY MORNING, whereas I put all I had to say in one.*[87]

- suggesting that the drama is perhaps overloaded with imaginative material which is insufficiently amplified and clarified. Like Barker, however, I believe that Bond does signal his transitions clearly and decisively. From the commencement of the play, the only serious role is Arthur; he is surrounded by caricature grotesques - monstrosities who give every impression of being quite at home in a monstrous world; it is only Arthur's pain which is real - and this is the core of the play. However, Florence Nightingale is both caricatured and invites empathy. In scene 9, for instance, she is dressed, walks and talks as John Brown. Yet in scene 19, we are required to adjust our focus because of her emotional involvement with Arthur:

> *FLORENCE: You're not alive! This is heaven! You can't live or laugh or cry or be in pain! You can't love! You can't torture people! Let me alone! You're a ghost! Ghost! Ghost! You're haunting me - O, stop it!*
>
> *ARTHUR: You're crying.*[88]

Florence develops according to the same sequence as Noel in CLAW: she starts as caricature in which the myth of her personality is satirised:

> *VICTORIA: Miss Nightingale is an expert sanitarian. We believe that to be a branch of eugenics.*[89]

- yet, in the final scene, as she sits apart weeping at the cannibalistic picnic, the audience are clearly meant to view her sympathetically. Bond performs identical voltes with a number of his other grotesque women: Georgina in THE NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH and Mrs Rafi in THE SEA(Royal Court 1973).

It can be seen therefore that Barker and Bond both tend to transgress the boundaries of form: with Bond, this kind of freedom to experiment aesthetically reaches its zenith in the fantasy of EARLY MORNING; for Barker, CLAW marks the start of a progression towards a comparable degree of artistic freedom such as came to fruition in plays like THE BITE OF THE NIGHT(RSC 1988). In contrast, since EARLY MORNING, Bond has subjected his theatrical imagination to ever-increasing conscious control for didactic ends. Though present in LEAR(Royal Court 1971), the grotesque/fantastic element diminishes significantly and in BINGO(Exeter Northcott 1973), THE FOOL(Royal Court 1975), THE BUNDLE(RSC 1978) and THE WOMAN(National Theatre 1978), it has disappeared altogether.

Gaskill also had problems with the increasingly literary style of Bond's post-SAVED plays. Apart from among the lower class characters such as Len, Joyce, Griss, Jones, Gladstone etc., the inarticulate speech style does not predominate as it does in SAVED and THE POPE'S WEDDING. The other characters tend to communicate in stylistically plain and laconic simple sentences - what Gaskill refers to here as 'cold and stripped':

> *I hadn't understood from my first response to his writing - which was THE POPE'S WEDDING and SAVED - which I took to be realistic plays, and still think they are, basically - I hadn't realised how much he wanted to use symbolism and allegory as part of his working method, and although I went along with it I finally cut off from it and felt unsympathetic towards it....I don't even think that SUMMER is a realistic play in the same way that SAVED was a realistic play; I think it's a very literary play, which I don't take SAVED to be at all. It's a play of ideas and the expression of them is not in any sense vernacular, it's not at all idiomatic. It's more what I call a European play, a play of ideas expressed in rather cold and stripped language. I don't think it's actually a play about here and now, I think all his*

plays are an attempt to write on classic themes, and the setting is always incidental. I think he wants to make statements which could be universal, so that the flavour of your own time is not the most striking thing about them, whereas I thought the writing of SAVED was enormously 'immediate'.'

In fact, there is there is a considerable 'literary/theatrical' inspiration behind both THE POPE'S WEDDING and SAVED though the style of the plays conforms superficially to the stereotypical 'Royal Court First Play' which suggests a youthful writer transcribing from raw first-hand experience - a myth which Bond has chosen to foster.[2] The source material for these plays, as with almost all of Bond's work, is literary. THE POPE'S WEDDING was based on Raleigh Trevelyan's book A HERMIT DISCLOSED whose subject was Alexander James Mason, the hermit of Great Canfield in Essex. The play could also include various other dramatic works among its immediate antecedents, - perhaps, most notably James Saunders' NEXT TIME I'LL SING TO YOU(1963) or Henry Livings' television drama JIM ALL ALONE, both of which focus on Trevelyan's hermit as the centre of dramatic interest. Likewise SAVED is very typical of a particular kind of play the Royal Court and the Arts Theatre Club were staging in the early sixties, shedding harsh light on areas of social and cultural deprivation; perhaps the most obvious inspiration for SAVED would have been INFANTICIDE IN THE HOUSE OF FRED GINGER by Fred Watson, also premiered,interestingly, by William Gaskill in 1962 at the Arts Theatre. This play begins by depicting the relationship between an incompatible couple, Catrine, a snobbish ex-nurse and the subservient, socially demoralised Jerry. John Russell Taylor describes the impact of this:

> *The relations of this couple are sketched in acutely and with unusual frankness (it must be the first time premature ejaculation has been not only discussed on the English stage but also vividly demonstrated), and Watson succeeds remarkably well in conveying that Jerry is rather a drip but that even drips are human and as such worthy of our sympathy and even, perhaps, in an odd way our respect.*[3]

There is a parallel here with the Len/Pam relationship in SAVED - especially with regard to 'drip' characteristics of the men and their subservience to the dominant women. The most obvious correspondence is in act two where three delinquent louts kill the unhappy couple's neglected baby. John Russell Taylor -

> *There follows a long, long scene leading up to the 'infanticide', which holds our attention not so much by advancing the play as by telling us 'young people today (or some of them) are like this', and then going on to show us. Aided no doubt by the freedom a club theatre allows the dramatist in employing four-letter words, Watson produces a formidable impression of veracity in the dialogue he gives his young people to speak...*[4]

Apart from a contemporary theatrical vogue for acts of ritualised or semi-ritualised violence - AFORE NIGHT COME (Arts 1962),THEATRE OF CRUELTY SEASON (LAMDA 1964), and Peter Brook's productions of KING LEAR(1962) and the

MARAT/SADE(1964) - there was also a tradition of plays about gangs; Barry Reckord's SKYVERS(Royal Court 1963) is very similar to SAVED in the colloquial, laconic texture of its dialogue. Bond's earliest plays would appear to owe much to the current theatrical preoccupations of the early sixties; this is not of course to deny altogether the possibility that the play was written at least to some extent 'from the life'. As I indicated above, I believe the interpretation of SAVED has been distorted by the public controversy it aroused and the lines the debate took. I find the play fascinating in the depth and resonance of some of its more enigmatic images. The character of Len is subtle and complex - in the penultimate scene Harry comes into his room to find him lying with his face against the floorboards, holding a knife: he pretends the knife is for clearing the gap between the floorboards so he can hear better what Pam and her latest lover are up to in the room beneath. Equally interesting is his attraction to Mary - a relationship(young man/older woman) which Bond quite simply burlesques in EARLY MORNING(Len and Joyce). Amongst all his plays, SAVED is remarkable for the extent to which it exposes and attempts to cope with issues of sexuality - though these are almost invariably treated within a context of violence. Gaskill:

> *Bond felt he'd been censored after the reaction to SAVED. He withdrew inside a fantasy - though still a very violent one.*[5]

In the works which followed, he tended to draw upon an expanding awareness of classic literature - directly in terms of subject matter and indirectly in terms of style.

THE NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH comprised the first of a series of plays overtly based on literature and literary figures; it also marked the beginning of a wider critical acceptance of Bond's work, - though much of this acceptance was based upon 'misinterpreting' the plays; at least according to Hay and Roberts:

> *The review in PUNCH worried that the audience laughed at Basho's haiku. TIME magazine saw Basho on a quest for enlightenment, 'a radiant shaft of wisdom that will have the direct luminous perception of one of his poems'. RECORD AMERICAN also saw him as 'an old priest who also searches for enlightenment, but is trapped in ugly politics'. The apotheosis of such misreading describes Basho as 'a kind, gentle, compassionate little man, full of charming self-effacement but very much aware of his own dignity...'*[6]

The account of Bond's work provided by Hay and Roberts is particularly useful with regard to the information it supplies about Bond's subsequent and retrospective attitudes to his plays. However, the authors have accepted without question Bond's personal ideologically-based interpretations and these are especially dubious in the case of his earlier work. In this instance, they view THE NARROW ROAD from the perspective of THE BUNDLE, the re-write which the dramatist felt it necessary to make a decade later. The first scene shows Basho on his way to the deep north for enlightenment finding an abandoned child; a distraught peasant woman and her husband inform him that they have been forced

to leave the child because they cannot afford to feed it. The wife asks Basho to take the child -

> *BASHO: No, I've given it all the food I had. But I'm poor too. And I'm going away to get enlightenment.*[7]

The poet then goes on his way attributing the child's fate to 'the irresistible will of heaven. So it must cry to heaven.'[8] Of this scene, Hay and Roberts say:

> *The central antithesis of the play's introduction is that of Basho's quest for enlightenment set against his leaving a child abandoned by its starving parents to die. There is no means whereby the audience may avoid the fact that the peasants and their child represent reality as it is, and Basho's poetic vocation consists of ignoring that reality, thereby relegating his 'art' to the false and immoral. Basho does make charitable gestures. He gives the child what food he has. He tidies the baby's clothes. And he leaves it to die. At the same time, he appeals directly to the audience to acquiesce in his description of himself as a 'great' poet, quotes his best poem at them as proof and evades any responsibility for what he sees. Basho's criminal action in the opening section of the play provides the basis on which he is to be judged throughout. Nothing he subsequently does should surprise.*[9]

This stark condemnation of Basho is perhaps somewhat arbitrarily censorious and owes not a little hindsight. The scene itself is more ambiguous. If Basho is as poor as the peasants - he says he is and we are given no reason to doubt him - he is surely no more 'criminal' than the parents themselves - he gave it all the food he had. As to the implication that Basho brags to the audience, once again, this is not at all clear:

> *BASHO:* *My name is Basho. I am, as you know, the great seventeenth century Japanese poet, who brought the haiku verse form to perfection and gave it greater range and depth.'*[10]

There is more than a hint of irony in the poet's words which sound as if they are being quoted from an entry in a literary dictionary. After all, what he says is generally accepted - he is a 'great' poet in much the same way that Homer or Dante or Petrarch are. By way of contrast, the Basho presented in the first scene of THE BUNDLE is a thoroughly unpleasant grandee. Whereas the peasant in THE NARROW ROAD talks to Basho as an equal without subservience, the Ferryman in THE BUNDLE has to refer to him constantly as 'the Reverend Sir.' In THE BUNDLE, Basho talks of his association with the landowner immediately and, far from giving anything away, he refuses even to pay his fare on the ferry. Later, in THE NARROW ROAD, Basho becomes involved directly in political action supporting the imperialists - even with his poetry; by this time his corruption has become clear, but it's important that the audience's perspective on this character should alter and develop. In the play, Basho has much to say that is

important and true. This Basho, the Basho of THE BUNDLE, Shakespeare in BINGO and Clare in THE FOOL all reflect differing contradictions and ambiguities involved in the role of the literary artist, the poet, which provide an interesting illumination of Bond's thinking about his own vocation.

I feel that Basho heralds and represents another important new direction in the development of Bond's style. The character recites several of his haiku, many of which seem to appear merely for their own sake. Bond seems to have been fascinated by the stark, ascetic economy of the haiku style with its isolated images:

> *Silent old pool*
> *Frog jumps*
> *Kdang!''*

Apart from the formal haiku, the haiku style seems to spill over into the dialogue producing isolated images often creative of a mystical effect: in the deep north, the deposed dictator, Shogo, and his disciple, Kiro, sit by a stream:

> *KIRO:* *The water's clear. The old man who brought me up had yellow teeth. I didn't like him to laugh in public.*
>
> *SHOGO:* *That was mean.*

KIRO: *I know.*

(Pause. They look into the water and not at each other.)

SHOGO: *It goes fast.*

KIRO: *But there are no waves.....*

(Pause)[12]

Shogo talks about a vague sense of guilt; the conversation peters out again to silence. Then -

KIRO: *It could be anything. You're always killing people.*

SHOGO: *It's not that. I remember all that. But my life goes on and on like a finger reaching out to point....*

(Slight pause. Still neither of them looks up)

KIRO: *(Tries to think)...The circle gets smaller and smaller.*

SHOGO: *(Still looking at the water)....What?*

KIRO: *The circle gets smaller and smaller.*

SHOGO: *Yes.....and the shadow gets bigger....*

(Pause. They still look at the water)

KIRO: *Some problems have no solution....*

(He looks at Shogo,shrugs and breaks the mood.)

You're woken up by the sound of your neck snapping.[13]

Almost all of these lines have the same aphoristic quality as formal haiku and the manner in which Bond inserts them into his dramatic narrative mirrors exactly the form of Basho's original 'The Narrow Road To The Deep North' where the poet punctuates a prose account of his travels with haiku resposes to the principal sights. sounds and events of each stage of the journey.[14] In Bond's final scene, Kiro says -

I understand now. Shogo was left by the river when he was a child. The upturned boat knocks against the pier.[15]

In this kind of poetic dialogue, the images owe their purity to their universality and isolation from any kind of context. They are not insinuated into the dialogue under a superficial naturalism to operate on a cumulative subconscious level - as might occur in Chekhov, but rather they assert themselves, challenging the critical consciousness, resisting immediate

connections. Shogo is a draconian, Stalinist dictator, who nevertheless seems to represent some kind of costly social progress; he justifies his violence thus:

> SHOGO: People are born in a tiger's mouth. I snatch them out and some of them get caught on the teeth.[16]

The image is attractive and superficially seductive, - especially if it is allowed to stand without any kind of dialectical or mute contextual contradiction. In the example cited previously, Kiro compares Shogo, who was abandoned by the river as a child, to an upturned boat knocking against the pier. The image is interesting and obviously integrates with the ubiquitous 'river' image, but does it in any way clarify the significance of Shogo's life? A boat knocking against a pier seems an immoderately understated expression of the dictator's bloody career and what light does the capsize shed upon his abandonment? The inference seems to be that Shogo's evil career was precipitated by the misfortunes of his infancy - his rejection as a child results in his own callous indifference to the sufferings of his fellows. Yet Bond has already suggested that Shogo was innately bad, - just as Len in SAVED was 'naturally good'.[17] Basho examines the child before leaving it:

> *BASHO: (He adjusts the rags) Ha! He stares at me as if I was a toy. What funny little eyes!*"[18]

More than a hint that this infant needs to be watched.

The novice Bhuddist priest, Kiro, seems to continue certain aspects of Len from SAVED, Scopey from THE POPE'S WEDDING and Arthur from EARLY MORNING - in particular, their search for enlightenment; all are remorseless questioners and attach themselves to individuals who seem to understand life. Interestingly, Kiro, after initially seeking spiritual insight with the poet Basho, attaches himself subsequently to Shogo, politician and violent builder of cities. When the latter is executed, Kiro commits hara kiri; his final words comprise a poem of Basho's which he finds on the ground:

I drain the cup
At the bottom
Flags.'[9]

The poem comes at the end of a sequence of such verses which counterpoint an anti-Shogo propaganda speech being delivered by Basho offstage; it immediately precedes the dictator's execution and dismemberment and its situation seems to give it particular dramatic significance. The words appear to suggest that, having pursued experience in a search for truth, the ultimate determinants of all human values are to be found in 'ugly politics'. For Kiro, this seems to be a final truth which makes life unacceptable. For Bond, it points towards an increasing politicisation of his work.

In THE NARROW ROAD, then, in addition to colloquial inarticulate speech and the laconic plainspeak of EARLY MORNING, Bond develops a 'poetic' form of utterance apparently related to the haiku which is integrated(though not without disruptive potential) into the dialogue of the play. The appeal of the haiku for Bond is, however, by no means fortuitous. In the introduction to his translation of Matsuo Basho's 'The Narrow Road To The Deep North', Nobuyuki Yuasa, in discussing the essence of haiku, cites the following comment by Basho:

> *Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise you impose yourself on the object and do not learn. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one - when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there. However well phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural - if the object and yourself are separate - then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit.*[20]

It is not difficult to see how such poetic theory based on mystical union with objects would recommend itself to Bond who not only maintained objectivity as a general principle - rejecting the 'subjectivity' of bourgeois drama but, perhaps more than any other dramatist, has vested concrete physical objects (in the sense of stage properties) with a dominant role in his creative processes. I will examine this in more detail later.

Bond's stage language also exhibits a fourth register which aims at clear, logical exposition; this can present the beguiling appearance of simple explication but closer scrutiny often reveals that Bond's rhetoric masks a thoroughly tendentious argument. This register is first encountered in some of Arthur's 'reasoning' speeches in EARLY MORNING. It is also the register of Bond's prefaces and 'author's notes'. This example from NARROW ROAD is fairly typical:

GEORGINA: Well, Shogo ruled by atrocity,

BASHO: Yes.

GEORGINA: It didn't work because it left people free to judge him. They said: he makes us suffer and that's wrong. He calls it law and order, but we say it's a crime against us - and that's why they threw spears at him. So instead of atrocity I use morality. I persuade people - in their hearts - that they are sin, and that they have evil thoughts, and that they're greedy, violent and destructive, and - more than anything else - that their bodies must be hidden, and that sex is nasty and corrupting and must be secret. When they believe all that they do what they're told. They don't judge you - they feel guilty themselves and accept that you have the right to judge them.[21]

Bond's achievement here is to express a complex conception - the relationship between a repressive social morality and authoritarion government - with economy and clarity in simple language. This brings me to an important generalisation concerning Bond's use of language which Gaskill described in the quotation cited on p.62 as 'cold and stripped'. Much of the classical literature Bond is known to have studied has been continental writing translated into English. Recently there has been a widespread awareness of the inadequacy of 'standard' translations which obliterate the vitality of the original - idiom, nuances of social class, dialect, local resonance - and dramatists have been engaged to adapt creatively the 'spirit' of the original. However, some writers, in their own original work, have deliberately sought to strip away this 'local colour' which inheres in any language. A notable example of this practice is to be found in Beckett whose most celebrated theatrical works were initially written in French - to the author, a foreign language - then translated into English.

> *Beckett's reasons for turning to French are by now fairly clear. The peculiar characteristics of English as a language are, firstly, its comparative freedom from grammatical rigidity, and secondly, the extraordinary powers of sensory evocation possessed even by the most insignificant of words. In English, the words do half the poet's work for him, and the temptation is to let them do more and more, to let them take over directly from a subconscious which gives the impulse but which does not direct, and for the writer merely to follow whithersoever the whim of language wanders.*[22](My emphasis)

The need to direct the subconscious impulse is very strong in Bond's work and this, coupled with conscious 'literary' aspirations, has inclined him to an ascetic, abstract style which - as Coe says of Beckett[23] - given the universal dimensions of the themes, can at times result in 'something very like banality'.

If THE NARROW ROAD represented a new 'literary' style and the beginnings of a critical acceptance of Bond's work, his LEAR consolidated and confirmed this. Both SAVED and certainly EARLY MORNING were provocative interventions in English theatre and, to an extent, LEAR is cast in a similar mould. Shakespeare's plays are a revered institution in the theatrical world - especially the tragedies. Just as the myths provided a common cultural heritage for ancient Greek dramatists to draw upon, Shakespeare could be seen to fulfil part of a similar cultural function in the history of the English stage. The idea of radically re-writing Shakespeare was certainly not new, or unique to Bond. The director/dramatist, Charles Marowitz had created considerable interest with his 'HAMLET'(1964) and, perhaps most successfully of all in commercial terms, there was Stoppard's ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD(1967). LEAR, however, seemed much more audacious than either of these in that the play takes itself more seriously to the extent of staking a claim to supersede the Shakespearean original. What Bond attempts to do is develop a play from the original which is relevant to the latter half of the twentieth century. In taking over Lear as his 'hero' and allowing him to dominate with a lot of the 'poetic' type of speech which he had developed in THE NARROW ROAD, Bond was abandoning the more ambiguous style he had used in the previous play where the issues are not clarified through the device of an obvious central character. In presenting his

audiences with a Lear he could expect them to have a ready-made set of assumptions about the character and the progress of the play. They would regard the king as an heroic figure, endowed with a special moral authority, and, though initially misguided, he develops through his sufferings to achieve fresh insights and a higher spiritual status; they would expect to be shocked, moved deeply and 'elevated'. LEAR does not frustrate any of these expectations, containing as it does many striking and effective theatrical images, as well as moments of great pathos. As with Shakespeare, Bond's Lear falls because his daughters turn against him. Bond makes it clear, however, that Bodice and Fontanelle are products of their father's autocratic and single-minded tutelage. Lear is obsessed with constructing a defensive wall which, he believes, will ensure peace and prosperity for his people; all other considerations come second to the accomplishment of this project. In scene one, we see Lear unjustly executing a worker for sabotage: he admits in an aside to Bodice -

> *LEAR:* *Of course there was an accident. But the work's slow. I must do something to make the officers move. That's what I came for, otherwise my visit's wasted. And there are saboteurs and there is something suspicious about this man* - 24

With the assistance of their husbands, the daughters defeat Lear in battle but the attitude they subsequently reveal towards their husbands, their treacherous politicking and their appalling treatment of the helpless Warrington, totally

belie their previous protests against Lear's unjust and despotic behaviour. Lear escapes their clutches long enough to take refuge with the Gravedigger's Boy - to whom I shall return later. His complaints at this stage are similar to those of Shakespeare's king:

> *LEAR:* *My daughters have taken the bread from my stomach. They grind it with my tears and the cries of famished children and eat. The night is a black cloth on their table and the stars are crumbs, and I am a famished dog that sits on the earth and howls. I open my mouth and they place an old coin on my tongue. They lock the door of my coffin and tell me to die. My blood seeps out and they write in it with a finger. I'm old and too weak to climb out of this grave again.*[25]

While the general sense of this is clear, the particular point and logic of the string of images is not, despite a picturesque, cosmic effect. The images of the first two sentences quoted are vaguely Biblical - 'bread','grind','tears' - thereby enhancing the moral authority of the speaker. The notion of the daughters taking bread from Lear's 'stomach' - on a literal level - is somewhat anatomically bizarre and inexplicable; if not literal, then it seems to comprise redundant 'literary padding'. Nor is it clear, vis a vis the grinding, whether the bread, already made and snatched from Lear's 'stomach' is being brutally mulched with these other ingredients or whether he has in mind the grinding of grain to

produce flour. Bread itself being baked, - not ground. Are we meant to envisage Fontanelle and Bodice applying themselves to such utilitarian occupations?

The following sentence compares the night to 'a black cloth on their table' and the stars to 'crumbs'; Lear is a 'famished dog that sits on the earth and howls'. The use of cosmic imagery, of course, does give the character of Lear an 'epic' feel('epic' in the classical sense). Shakespeare's Lear makes frequent references to the firmament. This particular sentence, however, is rather laborious, there being no active verb; it merely states three metaphors. The vocabulary does relate to Shakespeare's as there are comparisons in KING LEAR between the treatment meted out to the king and that meted out to dogs; one of Lear's most famous lines is the repetition of 'howl'. 'I open my mouth and they place an old coin on my tongue' is explained by the following sentence - 'They lock the door of my coffin and tell me to die.' This is, presumably, a literary reference to the ancient Greek custom of placing coins in the mouths of the dead to pay the ferryman, Chaeron, their fare into the underworld; as such it was a beneficial and reverential act performed by dutiful relatives - incompatible with what we have seen of Bodice and Fontanelle. There is perhaps another Biblical allusion here to Christ's rhetorical question - 'which of you, if your child asked for bread, would give him a stone?' - the brutal repudiation of emotional ties. Locking the door of a coffin affords a similar dislocation to taking bread from a stomach. The final image of the finger writing in blood is extravagant but doesn't suggest any particular meaning other than that the daughters would enjoy his sufferings; the expression,'writing in blood', again, is a literary commonplace. Taken together, the string of images are curiously

disjunctive: there is some consistency with the initial picture of Lear's daughters eating at table while Lear, as a famished dog, howls; however, does he remain a dog when the coin is put into his mouth, he is locked in his coffin and told to die? Why, the emphasis being on starvation and neglect, does blood seep out of the coffin? What and why do the daughters write? Lear's final line here - 'I'm old and too weak to climb out of this grave again' - with its suggestion that were he younger and a little stronger, he could cope by simply climbing out, negates the preceding locked door image. The 'poetry' of this speech has the effect of - firstly - proclaiming itself as poetry (cosmic imagery, literary allusion) but secondly posing problems about itself without illuminating the dramatic context or accumulating any intrinsic coherence. I commented earlier on Bond's liking for the isolated image abstracted from context; this can become problematic where several images are used, though metaphors are not usually mixed(the lockable coffin?), they do not integrate or coalesce to form a cohesive whole.

In a discussion with critics, Bond was asked why he didn't write novels:

> *The idea of writing a novel doesn't appeal to me, there are so many words; I hate words, you see, and all that sort of description that goes into them.*[26]

This avowed antipathy might seem somewhat paradoxical in a writer were not the evidence for it fairly abundant in the plays. Bond's first instinct, as a dramatist, is to communicate in concrete physical images. In the earliest plays,

such speech as he did employ was, as I have shown, of a deficient, transparent nature; later, the rational/polemical style, developed initially in the 'prefaces', existed primarily to justify and explicate the aesthetic impulse; the 'poetic' style lays claim to poetry by virtue of allusive metaphor but eschews musicality with language which is essentially concrete and denotative. Bond's greatest strength, as a playwright, lies in his ability to create powerful physical images - stage pictures; the physicality is not only complemented but positively emphasised by the austere economy of the dialogue. This aspect of his stagecraft is perhaps the most valuable legacy of his years with the Royal Court Writers Group which introduced him to the whole gamut of what has since become the stock in trade of educational drama - group-work, exercises, games and improvisation. At the most obvious level, Bond has employed conventional sporting activities to considerable effect in heightening the energy level on stage: there is the cricket match in THE POPE'S WEDDING, the tug-of-war in EARLY MORNING, the leapfrogging and general horseplay of the young priests in scene 3 of THE NARROW ROAD; most significantly, there is the throwing about of the pram in SAVED which builds up to the stoning; there is the snowballing in BINGO, the boxing match in THE FOOL, the 'army games' during the trial of Ismene in THE WOMAN. None of these instances are mere requisites of the narrative but the physical activity is integral to the dramatic functioning of the scene. Apart from these, an examination of Bond's texts reveals a high level of physical activity and numerous 'group' scenes where violent activity is carefully orchestrated.

A common form of drama game involves constructing improvisations around specific objects. Where Bond requires properties on stage, these are never incidental and will be used for particular dramatic effect. For example, Len, in the final scene of SAVED mends a chair broken in scene 12 - the stage directions for this are lengthy and extremely precise; he asks Pam to bring on a hammer but she ignores him. In the final scene of EARLY MORNING, Victoria prepares to dispose of Arthur's corpse; George and Florence bring on a coffin and Victoria sends Florence offstage again for a hammer:

> *VICTORIA: (To Florence) Hammer? (Florence goes out) I have to think of everything. It'll be interesting to see if she brings the nails.*[27]

When Florence returns, she sets to work:

> *VICTORIA: After we've put him in the box.(ALBERT and GEORGE put ARTHUR in the coffin) Hammer. (FLORENCE hands her the hammer) Nails. (FLORENCE drops her hands to her sides)*
>
> *GEORGE: (Tilts his head back and puts his right palm on his brow) Tch.*
>
> *(FLORENCE turns to go)*

VICTORIA: I'll use my teeth. (She pulls out a tooth and looks at it) That'll hold better. (She knocks it into the coffin) One. (She pulls out another tooth and knocks it in) Two. Be putting the food out. (She pulls out another tooth)

LEN It ain' none a that fancy stuff, ma?

VICTORIA: (Knocking) No.

JOYCE: Shame. I enjoy anythin' exotic. They ain' got the taste for it.

VICTORIA One more.

GRISS Don't pull the lot.

VICTORIA They'll grow. (Knocks) And I've got handy gums.[28]

The 'reality'(for the audience) of this nailing down of the coffin lid is important for a number of reasons but chiefly because it prepares the theatrical 'coup' of Arthur's escapologist-style levitation which follows. In THE NARROW ROAD, the dictator,Shogo, uses a hammer to smash the sacred pot which has become wedged on Kiro's head, an incident clearly related to the smashing of the teapot on Harry's head in SAVED. A hammer is used by Wang in one of the most spectacular stage effects in THE BUNDLE to smash a stone cangue around a

woman's neck; towels are used to muffle the sound of the blows. Perhaps the most consistently used property in Bond's oeuvre is the white sheet. In the final dramatic moment of EARLY MORNING referred to above, Arthur rises from his coffin *'draped in a long white smock or shawl'*. In NARROW ROAD, Shogo's dismembered body is displayed on a white placard concealed initially by a white sheet. In scene five of BINGO, the sheet becomes a snow field. In THE FOOL, the sheet appears initially as a bundle being used to carry stolen silver but is subsequently wrapped around the head of the injured Lawrence where it becomes increasingly blood-stained. In RESTORATION, the unhappy Ann, Lady Are, dons a sheet to simulate a ghost in order to terrify her husband; she is stabbed through the sheet. In THE BUNDLE, the baby Wang throws into the river is wrapped in a white sheet:

> *(As he hurls the child far out into the river he holds a corner of the white sheet in his hand and it unravels, catches the wind and falls to hang from his hand.)*[28]

In the same play, when the mutilated Tiger is hauled on in scene 8 we are told that *'The upper part of his body is knotted in a sheet.'* But perhaps the most spectacular use of this property occurs in Act 1 Scene 7 of LEAR where Lear's rural sanctuary is shattered by the arrival of soldiers who kill the Gravedigger's Boy and rape his wife. The boy has already gone down the well to investigate the dirty water, leaving Lear and Cordelia to hang the sheets from a washing line; Bond makes clever use of this 'business' to illustrate the characters' attitudes and concerns: Cordelia is afraid of Lear and wants him to go; he is by turns petulant and submissive; she stands on one side of the line

while he hands her pegs from the other; in hanging the sheets she creates a wall between them. Simultaneously, this mundane activity establishes a tangible feeling of domesticity which renders all the more shocking the brutal interruption of the soldiers. When they realise the boy is down the well and, unaware of their presence, about to emerge, the soldiers hide behind the sheets with Cordelia; the boy appears carrying the wounded Warrington but he realises from Lear's appearence that something is wrong:

(SOLDIER E shoots him. He staggers upstage towards the sheets. His head is down. He clutches a sheet and pulls it from the line. CORDELIA stands behind it. Her head is down and she covers her face with her hands. SOLDIER D is preparing to rape her. The BOY turns slowly away and as he does so the sheet folds slowly around him. For a second he stands in silence with the white sheet draped around him. Only his head is seen. It is pushed back in shock and his eyes and mouth are open. He stands rigid. Suddenly a huge red stain spreads on the sheet.)

SERGEANT: Kill the pigs.

(SOLDIER E runs off)

SOLDIER F:(Peering down at WARRINGTON) Chriss look at this!

SERGEANT: (To SOLDIER D) Do that inside.

LEAR: She's pregnant.

SOLDIER D:It can play with the end.

SOLDIER F:(poking WARRINGTON'S mouth with the end of his rifle) Look at this blowin' bubbles!

(Off, squealing starts as the pigs are slaughtered. SOLDIER D takes the WIFE into the house. The BOY suddenly drops dead.)[30]

The effect of this sequence on stage, the climax of the first act of the play, is quite extraordinarily powerful and it provides an excellent illustration of Bond's skill in choreographing movement and properties; within the context of the play, the Gravedigger's Boy symbolises the innocence of a pastoral lifestyle to which Lear, sickened and disillusioned with politics, turns eagerly for respite. The boy himself is open, generous and responds with a 'natural' kindness to the sufferings of others; he temporarily restores Lear's faith in humanity but his goodness is inadequate within the context of the armed state which intervenes through the agency of the soldiers. The sheet he wraps himself in symbolises that innocence, its immaculacy annihilated by the blood that pours from within; it also suggests a shroud and the slow motion of the wrapping brilliantly evokes the psychological effect of the loss of physical power - the loss of the body itself - as he stands, pinioned, a monument to impotent anguish; simultaneously, Bond has used the sheet as a 'reveal', so that the boy (along with the audience) is suddenly confronted with the horror of his wife's

rape which he is powerless to prevent. In this strange and almost timeless moment between life and death, the audience can see the transition to the figure of the ghost which will haunt Lear till the end of the play. The image of impotence suggested in the pinioning of the arms is repeated time and again throughout Bond's plays: Lear, put in a straightjacket before his eyes are removed, is pathetically unaware of his plight until too late; one of the most powerful images in THE FOOL is Clare being dragged from his garden, arms pinioned by a rope; in his final appearence, he is unable to speak and is bound in a straitjacket. The 'bound' human image linked to the 'white' human image appears most notably in THE WORLDS in the character of The White Figure -

> *.....in a white boiler suit, no shoes, white socks and a white hood. The face isn't seen. The legs and hands are tied. It looks like a giant maggot.*[3]

The persistence with variations and interconnections of these images formed from the human body, costume and properties is a conscious element in Bond's dramaturgy. Nor are these merely conceived of as means to an end; within Bond's imagination, the sheet and the hammer, for instance(to name only two), are symbols which command a loyalty commensurate with their potency:

> *I don't see the future as a dark space: the sort of space into which one would want to, or at any rate could, shine a torch. As a writer I*

think of our future as a large, white sheet, perhaps as big as the sky, covering whatever is in front of me; and on this sheet I wish to draw. The drawings will be, I hope, black on white and simple.

Instead of an 'issue' I want something which is very simple. It should function as a tool - as a hammer - which, when the audience sees it, imposes (because it is a truth) a change in them.

The greater change is made by the handle of the hammer not the head.[32]

These meditations from Bond's notebooks for AFTER THE ASSASSINATIONS indicate how physical objects are crucial to the dramatist's thinking; there is a continual interplay between the properties of the objects - cover, reveal(white will show up black drawings), directed violence, handle graspable etc. - and metaphorical applications which will ensure that when objects are deployed on stage their presence is integral and they are not there as incidental facilitators of the narrative. It is almost as if for Bond the objects possess in themselves a creative potency which draws him back time after time like the haiku poet to new insights.

It is this concrete/symbolical economy which is the most distinctive and characteristic feature of Bond's theatre. As I have indicated, his attitude to language is ambivalent: literary aspiration is combined with mistrust of words

and an ascetic impulse harnessed to a constant drive for simplicity can lead to him being seduced by aphorism or reduced to banality. He is well aware of the former temptation:

> *I want to avoid being 'knowing'. This is a typical 'knowing' point: if there is an execution wall in your city, don't congratulate yourself - as you go about your business - that you are on the right side of the wall. Both sides of a wall can be used for executions. In a time of chaos they are.*[33]

Bond's plays have become increasingly and quite consciously subordinated to the writer's political philosophy and political aims which are stated, illustrated and emphasised overtly. However, it must be said that Bond's 'Marxism' is a thoroughly idiosyncratic and peculiarly theological phenomenon. Nor is it difficult to point to the anomalies, confusions and self-contradictions in Bond's copious critical writings. I will select one example, however, which is not only typical but which serves to highlight a significant lacuna in the Bondian cosmos. In his 'Author's Note' to SAVED, Bond states -

> *There will always be some people sophisticated enough to do the mental gymnastics needed to reconcile science and religion. But the mass of people will never be able to do this, and as we live in an industrial society they will be educated in the scientific tradition. This means that in future religion will never be more than the opium of the intellectuals.*[34]

This is an argument that could only recommend itself to 'intellectuals' to whom logical or philosophical contradiction might present itself as a problem. The implication that 'the mass of people' will simply discard religious doctrine because it contradicts what they know of science is very far from being evident in fact; religious fundamentalism in, for example the United States as well as many Islamic countries, frequently coexists symbiotically with an uncritical veneration of Science and all its works. Bond's argument assumes that - when it comes to accepting or rejecting ideology - intellectual and logical coherence have the same priority for 'the mass of people' as they do for himself. The example is interesting in that it reveals Bond's propensity to dispose of contradiction through his own rationalisations, rather than accept the problem posed by the empirical facts.

> *In human beings the idea always takes precedent over instinct. This is a revolutionary concept because it completely changes the way in which we think of both human beings and their societies. It means that human beings act not in accordance with the emotions they bring into the world but in accordance with the ideas they are taught and acquire while they are in it. We think of emotions as motivating actions but really emotions spring from and are directed by ideas. This means that humanity is made by human beings - or rather by being human - and that ultimately when human beings are inhuman it is their interpretation of themselves and their society that is at fault. This does not mean that emotions have no importance but that they function in accordance with ideas. People become Nazis, for example, not because they have a particularly aggressive and ugly*

character but because their character is formed by certain ideas. These ideas then licence the emotions.[35]

This passage highlights the hierarchical, static, non-dialectical nature of Bond's thinking. It is strikingly similar to the Platonic universe. In terms of classic Marxism where the elements of a social system function dialectically but the ultimate determinants are material and economic, Bond's emphasis on the importance of ideas would be dismissed as idealism. This simplistic notion of the hegemony of ideology in regulating the behaviour of the individual is borne out in Bond's theatrical practice; it is evident in his lack of interest in the complexities of character and his exaggerated belief in the potential of theatre for effecting social change. His subordination of the role of emotion in motivating behaviour is particularly significant and tendentious: while it is arguable that some people become Nazis for ideological reasons, it is equally tenable that others are drawn to Nazi ideas because these recommend themselves or merely give licence to their aggressive and ugly character structures.[36] However, it is also possible for aggressive and ugly individuals to espouse humanitarian and socialist ideals but this kind of contradiction is anathema to Bond:

I know, of course, that an unhappy home might make one person a criminal and another a saint - people always respond individually. But it follows that contact with a saint might make someone else into a criminal. There is no way out of these pessimistic reflections unless we understand that, as a whole, a community takes on the

characteristic of its culture - that set of ideas and culture by which the society functions.[37]

Like most people I am a pessimist by experience, but an optimist by nature, and I have no doubt that I shall go on being true to my nature. Experience is depressing, and it would be a mistake to be willing to learn from it.[38]

While granting that the Wildean absurdity of the final flourish here may signal an ironic piece of Bondian provocation, there is nevertheless a consistent attitude being expressed. Considering his strongly held view of the 'social world' as evil, an evil which seeks - for the most part successfully - to crush the natural goodness of the child (the symbolic infanticide), then what most people learn from their experience is bad. On the other hand for Bond, the refusal of individuals to respond predictably to social pressure is a source of 'pessimistic reflections' - as it has been no doubt throughout the ages to all systematisers and conscious or unconscious totalitarians. Unlike Brecht whose ideas and practice have otherwise profoundly influenced him, Bond does not delight in contradiction. He dismisses this human propensity by taking refuge in the norm ('community' 'as a whole') and the 'set of ideas and culture' are envisaged as a coherent unity which - though they currently justify the status quo and the ruling class - nevertheless offer the potential of building a just and equal society. With regard to religion especially, Bond presents a series of priests in THE FOOL, THE WOMAN, and RESTORATION who are increasingly contemptible and vicious propagandists. Yet Christianity harbours a mass of

contradictions and although it has lent its moral weight to the forces of political reaction, its doctrines have also been enlisted to support revolutionary socialism.

Interestingly, Bond uses this contradiction as the basis of an early agit-prop play, BLACK MASS, written to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Sharpville Massacre in 1970. The single scene is set in a South African church to which the Prime Minister has resorted for spiritual consolation to sustain him through troubled times. An appalled Christ comes down from the cross and murders the Prime Minister by poisoning the communion wine. The priest and police inspector dismiss Christ from his position on the cross and substitute a uniformed storm-trooper. The play relies for its effect on the contradiction between the ideals of Christianity as represented by the religion's founder and the obscene perversion of these within the context of the Apartheid State. Unfortunately this dramatist's instinct for focussing on contradiction, has not been incorporated into Bond's critical consciousness - to the detriment of his work which has tended increasingly to present issues in simplistic, one-dimensional terms. Bond merely presents the rule, whereas Brecht could use the exception to prove the rule.[39]

The crudely mechanistic nature of Bond's recent theoretical approaches to his dramaturgy is well summed up in the interview quoted in the final chapter of David Hirst's EDWARD BOND. Hirst prefaces the quotation with the comment:

> *Bond is not interested in the possible dialectic created by a different mind interpreting his work.*[40]

In this context, Hirst is talking about directors but the statement applies equally to audiences.

> *I would like to feel there was some way in which you can dislodge segments of belief that people have so that the whole structure of their ideology is changed. Suppose there's a mosaic and I just move one piece. as a result of that every piece of the mosaic has to readjust itself. You can do that and end up with a different picture. That's a good approach to an audience. You might be knocking out cornerstones. Of course a whole mosaic can't be changed so easily. but you work at it because mosaics can be changed. This is a difficult experience for an audience and it should be an exciting experience. The audience should actually get a reward at the moment - but later they should get more. It should become part of the practice of their own life.*[41]

Taken to its logical conclusion, this could be seen as degrading the dramatist's art to the same level as that of the ad-man and the propagandist - only the ends are different. The use of the word 'reward' suggests the carrot and stick world of Burroughs Skinner's behaviourism with its concepts of stimulus.

response and reinforcement. The attempt to persuade, however, should recognise and respect the right of the other to his or her opinion; the attempt to manipulate does not and, for Bond, the urge to manipulate appears to have become paramount.

It is in the area of contradiction, that Bond's attitude contrasts most strikingly with Barker's. Nowhere is this more so than in the field of character and the individual:

> *I think progressive theatre has to be engaged with the individual. The idea of expressing collectivity on the stage seems to me not really desirable. When I talk about character and the self in the theatre, I'm not talking about the stable self you get in bourgeois theatre - the carbonised individual - I'm interested in the individual as the potential of many selves. We all carry within ourselves the reversal of our own prejudices, the reversal of our instincts. It's all there - the possibility of anything exists with anybody which is why I think that evil is not settled for good. Merely showing people as forces with social relations defined by symbolic figures - I think that's now become an impediment to liberation. We need to see self as a potential ground for renewal and not as something stale and socially made.*[42]

It is certainly true to say that the focus of Barker's writing is upon the individual, yet these are not - as one might expect - 'rounded' naturalistic creations but strangely passionate fantasy figures; critics have referred to them as 'grotesques'.[43] As I have suggested, these appear to have been developed out of caricature. Even minor roles in a Barker play are highly individualised: whereas in LEAR, Bond nominates his soldiers from 'Soldier A' to 'Soldier O', in CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES, Barker's soldiers are 'Ditch','Downchild' and 'Isted'. The difference is indicative of the respective dramatists' attitudes.

For Barker it is the possibility of reversal implicit in the idea of contradiction which informs his interest in character:

> *My characters sense the warping, shaping and distorting effect of society upon themselves and then they struggle against it. They define themselves and create themselves in resistance to forces. Take Hacker in THE LOVE OF A GOOD MAN: Hacker is part of bourgeois exploitation - he's a spiv; the war and capitalism provide him with an opportunity and he arrives at a certain point. But the play is not about the spectacle of Hacker dehumanised by capitalism; it is about Hacker discovering who he might be and therefore grappling with it, - to some extent defining himself in opposition to those forces. At the end of the play he learns a great deal about himself and turns against those individuals who in a Bond play would stand for*

authority. Although people are initially created by situations, the trajectory of the play is about self-definition - about refusal.[44]

In STRIPWELL, first performed in 1975 at the Royal Court, Barker gives a dramatic demonstration of this kind of 'refusal'. The play begins with a single spotlight illuminating Stripwell, a judge, seated at a desk beneath the royal coat of arms.

STRIPWELL: Not in possession of a firearms certificate, but wielding a shotgun.... at the wheel of a Ford Cortina, not belonging to you... not only without a licence, but banned from driving... you careered along a precinct, not open to traffic... with the sole and sworn purpose of - to use your phrase - pissing in their eyeballs, an ambition in which you were utterly successful. Your orgy of malicious damage was only curtailed when you came into collision with a cluster of concrete flower tubs. Your motivation appears to have been some ill-defined sense of grievance and social injustice. Before I sentence you, have you anything to say?

(Pause, then a second spot flicks on to show the defendant, CARGILL, a man of about 25.)

CARGILL: *Yes. If you put me away, I will escape and murder you.*

(Long pause)

STRIPWELL: *I see. (Pause, then he looks at his watch) It's 12.15. I have some shopping to do. We will adjourn and pass sentence this afternoon.*

(Nervously he gathers some papers together, and is just rising when the lights snap out.)[45]

Stripwell is a very untypical Barker character in that he has succumbed passively to all of the pressures of middle-class society; as a judge he embodies the liberal/humane values of that society. Privately, however, he cuts a shabby and diminutive figure in a home dominated by the 'macho' charisma of his father-in-law, Jarrow, a superannuated socialist politician, and his obnoxious son, Tim, who is embarking upon a career in international drug dealing. He has come to the realisation that relations with his wife have always been a failure and has begun a desperate affair with a go-go dancer, an aspiring novelist who is 'collecting experience'. The initial refusal here is Cargill's - who reiterates his threat when Stripwell does in fact sentence him to prison. The judge, impressed by the threat, attempts for the first time to wrest control of his own life. He is brutally frank with the hypocritical, pampered Jarrow, attempts unsuccessfully to leave his wife and 'shops' his criminal son to the police. However, his painful attempts at self-definition fail and when Cargill confronts

him with a shotgun in the final scene, Stripwell pleads, advancing the tenets of of the lifestyle he has just lately been struggling to refuse:

> *STRIPWELL: If everybody went around just following the dictates of his anger....and there wasn't any compromise...I think you'll see there wouldn't be much....of a world to live in. We're always having to cut down on our good intentions....make do with less...*[46]

In Cargill, however, Stripwell is faced with a character diametrically opposed to his own, whose unswerving adherence to his first instinct gives him an unquestionable if anti-social integrity. He does not engage in discussion with his victim, merely listens to his point of view.

> *STRIPWELL: We have to draw a line between what we feel... here - (He touches his heart) Our first impulse - and what is practical. (Pause) Don't we?*
>
> *(A long, agonizing silence. CARGILL watches STRIPWELL, swaying slightly on his knees now. When the pause seems barely tolerable, CARGILL turns and walks away, then stops and looks back at STRIPWELL who doesn't dare to move. Then he walks further, climbs up on the sofa to go out by the window, and stops again, looking back at the motionless figure. Then at last he goes out.*
>
> *STRIPWELL remains on his knees, his eyes slowly close, then at last open again. With leaden movements he climbs to his feet and walks*

unsteadily to the drinks cabinet. He leans on it a moment, then takes a whiskey bottle and a glass. he pours a drink, holds it in his hand a few seconds, runs his hand through his hair, and finally, with supreme relief, lifts the glass to his lips. At that moment, CARGILL bursts back through the window, trembling, with the shotgun levelled at STRIPWELL. He lets out a defiant yell.)

CARGILL: No!

(Just as STRIPWELL turns, he fires. STRIPWELL collapses, the glass breaks. The lights go out.)[47]

The stagecraft is very precise. The situation mirrors and inverts the climax of CLAW but here the suspense appears to end with the triumph of the suppliant which lays the basis for a stunning reversal. Barker's use of the drink business, cliched standby of the box-set-lounge,middle-class drama, is highly symbolic, as is Cargill's entry through the window, trampling across the sofa. Particularly important in production, again, is the use of the 'cry' as stipulated ('a defiant yell') on the single word 'No!' The audience shouldn't condone Cargill's action but the cry, with the 'trembling', needs to elicit an empathy, some kind of emotional insight so that the killer is not a totally alienated figure.

In'Dreams and Deconstructions', a survey of alternative theatre in Britain published in 1980, Steve Grant cites this particular moment as characteristic of

Barker at his distinctive best:

> *Barker's ability to create startling coups de theatre is almost unrivalled among his peers....*[46]

> *Barker can create colossal, even unforgettable confrontations out of thin air....*[47]

Unlike many serious contemporary dramatists, Barker is able to exploit suspense because the audience sense the freedom his characters possess; we 'believe' in the reality of the conflicts between Claw and his gaolers,between Stripwell and Cargill - that the issue genuinely hangs in the balance and things are really up for grabs. Whereas in Bond's plays, the characters are whirled and crushed as victims or agents of overwhelming abstract forces, Barker celebrates the sensation of personal freedom. It is a point of view which also asserts individual responsiblity in an age when this has become unfashionable. In THE HANG OF THE GAOL, one of Barker's most remarkable creations, the senior civil servant, Jardine, heads an enquiry into a fire which has demolished a prison. The prisoner, Turk, has come to confess to the arson:

> *TURK:* *Your mission ends with me, Jardine.*
>
> *JARDINE* *What makes you so conclusive then?*

TURK: *Are my words to be published? I need to know that or I don't speak.*

JARDINE: *Your vain literary ambition, is it? To be in a dusty ministry cellar?*

TURK: *You take me for a turd. I will show you I am not one. I ask for all my fellow sufferers in the archipelago.*

JARDINE: *Ah, he reads Solzhenitsyn. An educated thug, this one.*

TURK: *There were no books we could not get here. Education was on the agenda. As for being a thug, I resent that. Leave it out or I don't speak.*

JARDINE: *My papers tell me a postman is half-crazy following what you did to him. They had to wire his jaw and feed him through a nostril. I shudder.*

TURK: *It is not the matter here, is it!*

JARDINE: *No. But I am against your pride. There is an idea got around that criminals are rebels. They are not rebels, they are the lowest form of speculator, but instead of wielding money they wield - what was your currency - a hammer?*

TURK: *(Standing) I do not speak.*

JARDINE: *Oh, sit down. Ye've got by without pride long enough.*[50]

Even more culpable are those who abuse power - Jardine favours shooting them. In NO END OF BLAME, the newspaper editor, Diver, ordered by the proprieters to fire the distinguished but politically uncomfortable cartoonist, Bela Veracek, attempts to evade personal responsibility through judicious choice of phrase:

DIVER: *Yes.(Pause) I wonder if you'll hear me out? (Pause) You see the feeling exists -*

BELA: *THE FEELING EXISTS!*

DIVER: *No, I didn't think you would -*

BELA: *THE FEELING EXISTS!*

DIVER: *Yes -*

BELA: *NO SUCH FUCKING THING. Feelings don't exist. What do you think they are? Floating around in the air? Pluck 'em, do you, whizzing past like wasps? Who feels the feeling, Anthony?*

DIVER: *Well, all right -*

BELA: *If it stinks, if it rots your little conscience, in the passive tense it goes! Nuclear devices were dropped - shots were fired - feelings exist - No! Say it in your person, I DROPPED, I FIRED, I FEEL!*[51]

Personal freedom means also that we are responsible: in the mass society where the individual is the puppet of huge social forces there is, literally, 'no end of blame' because the buck is always passable. THAT GOOD BETWEEN US depicts a Britain plunging into political darkness with death squads dumping the bodies of their victims on Wimbledon Common; the title pinpoints the dramatist's focus: the state of the nation does not hinge upon refusal or adoption of any particular political ideology but rather it is a direct reflection of the erosion of trust between individuals in an environment which abounds with spies and informers. The most interesting character is the Glaswegian dosser, Billy McPhee, a bestial drunk who is employed by the security services to infiltrate an idealistic conspiracy of military subversives; the conspiracy is liquidated but McPhee has been transformed through the contact and must be similarly disposed of. His 'handler', Knatchbull, talks in the same vicious depersonalised terms as Diver:

KNATCHBULL: *...I think people are deteriorating. If you look at history there have been times when people seemed to sink down very low. I think this must be one of them. (Pause.) I'm sorry, Billy, it must be the situation, you see. That's to blame for your situation.....*[52]

The entire play occurs as a flashback between the first and last scenes; in the former, Billy is executed by being taken out to sea in a rowing boat and dumped:

MCPHEE: What if I make it? I've done a mile. I've got the fuckin' certificate to prove it! What happens if I make it, eh?

KNATCHBULL: We will look berks.

MCPHEE: Yoo fuckin' will![53]

He is dumped overboard and beaten violently with an oar. The final scene, however, signals a return to this location with the flashing of a lighthouse.

(The beach at night. The five second flash of the lighthouse sweeps the stage. Slowly, staggering from the extreme depth of the stage, naked and half-drowned, MCPHEE appears. He staggers to the front, opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out.)

MCPHEE: I....(He swallows, pauses.) I.....(He hesitates, gaping. Slowly a smile of relief crosses his face.) I. (He begins to laugh, holding himself in his arms.) I! I! (He rolls about on his knees in ecstasy.) I! I! I!

(The lights fade on him yelling. The lighthouse flashes.)[54]

Barker again uses 'the cry' at a climactic moment, but this time the word is 'I' - an assertion of triumphant individuality. Billy has not only survived but in doing so he has made 'berks' of his executioners. It is yet another permutation of the CLAW situation where the protagonist drowned; this time there is a victory - albeit, within the context of the play, a small one.

> *I yelled and bewilderment turned to exultation as Billy McPhee realised that he was still alive. 'Well, I couldn't kill him,' said the author, halfway through rehearsals for THAT GOOD BETWEEN US at the RSC Warehouse,'but of course survival is not in itself sufficient grounds for optimism.'*[65]

CHAPTER THREE: History

One final area I should like to consider in this comparative study is that of history. Given, as we have seen, Bond's and Barker's respective attitudes towards the individual, it is not surprising that their views of history are almost diametrically opposed. For Bond, as a Marxist, History is an important and positive concept:

> *History is the struggle for reason.*[1]

Whereas Barker can find sympathy for those who struggle against both History and - sometimes - reason. According to Bond, one of the functions of Theatre is to present History:

> *Is there another sort of socialist play, another sort of epic, in which the characters aren't only in history but are its representatives? Aren't only class types but types of history or spokespeople of its forces, so that the play embodies history itself? Such an epic wouldn't only be an account or story, it would be a*

poem. It would put history on stage as a dramatic reality. In it subjective qualities could again be used to transcribe history. It might help us to see and understand people in a new way....

History wouldn't be shown as immanent in an individual, individuality would be transcended by the historical pattern which it represented....

The characters wouldn't be moved by personal motives but by the forces of history...

In epic theatre dramatic development doesn't come from the individual coming to terms with himself but from his changing society so that everyone in it may be more human.[2]

The proper course for the individual is to align himself/herself with the advance of history through a correct understanding of the same. However, none of Bond's three history plays - BINGO, THE FOOL, and THE WOMAN make any concessions to the historian's disciplines or perspectives. Historical figures and incidents are presented but factual accuracy is not a priority; yet BINGO and THE FOOL, especially, have confused audiences because, unlike the caricature fantasy of EARLY MORNING and THE NARROW ROAD, their style comes close to naturalism. Both present the dilemmas of creative artists - Shakespeare and Clare - which stem from their awareness of the injustice of the societies they live in and their inability to do anything about it. Both are portrayed against a background of social unrest created by enclosures. Shakespeare is corrupt by

virtue of his social position amongst the gentry and he commits suicide alienated from his family, tormented by conscience. Conversely, Clare belongs to the rural working class; he is unable to achieve success as a poet because he must compromise his artistic integrity to pander to ruling class patrons. Clare's sanity falls victim to the pressures exerted by contradictory demands and he ends in an asylum. Both men are trapped in history, pinioned between their artistic sensibility and the institutionalised injustice of their time; the difference between them and Bond is that he possesses the Marxist resources to promote constructive change. The presentation of Shakespeare is obviously entirely speculative but Clare's fate is substantially well documented. However, any universality implied in this presentation of Clare's dilemma is surely q estionable though the attractions of his case to Bond's creative temperament are clear. THE FOOL presents physical resistance(via Darkie and the riots) th u h this lacks any ideol gical coherence. But historically such ideological re istance did exist - in the poetic arena and not merely from the privileged s h as Byron who is referred to in the play. Robert Burns provides an example of w rking class artistic achievement which combined a degree of personal success with a radical commitment which reached well beyond the literary salons to touch the lives of ordinary people. However, the essential characteristic of any Bond hero/heroine seems to be a capacity for suffering which, at times, verges on the masochistic. For example - the incident in THE BUNDLE where Wang, demonstrating supreme self-control, bites his lip so hard that the blood runs down. In the unsuccessful AFTER THE ASSASSINATIONS, a renegade soldier in a sleeping bag, carves a message with a knife on his own chest while being ritually shot to death by other soldiers.[4] For Bond's protagonists, 'the way' seems to lie not merely through accepting one's allocation of suffering but

through deliberately augmenting this with excess. Refusal of suffering is not a valid strategy.

THE FOOL AND BINGO focus on the dilemmas of the artist in different historical periods. In THE WOMAN, the scope is much wider; Bond presents whole societies locked in conflicts which reflect broad issues of ideology and imperialism. The first part of the play presents the final days of the war between Trojans and Greeks; the second half is concerned with successful Athenian imperialism and demonstrates how this impinges upon 'primitive' islanders. Bond uses legendary characters from the Homeric Epics and the war is the Trojan war but the social background is that of the sixth century Athenian hegemony which developed not from the conquest of Troy but from the Delian League and the defeat of the Persians. Bond's claim to be presenting a world dominated by myth rests largely on the introduction of the figure of the Dark Man, the miner who represents the economic foundations of Athenian civilisation - the slave labour in the silver mines.

> *I wanted to go back and re-examine that world and how moral and rational it was, and whether or not it could be a valid example for a society like ours. I came to the conclusion that it wasn't. What I had to do was to reverse those values so that in the play there is a man, Heros, who stands for the classical values of beauty and order, and he is opposed by a miner who stands for a new order, for a new*

proletarian direction of history. There's a conflict between them and the miner wins.[5]

In the play, Bond claims, Hecuba stands for the wisdom of history and the miner for the force of history; together they defeat Heros. The defeat, however, is merely symbolic of our own revolutionary possibilities; Athenian imperialism remains at the end of the play with a far brighter future than Bond's 'natural' islanders or the slaves in the mines. As a critique of that civilisation this is inadequate; unlike the historian, Bond does not expose myth by opposing it with evidence. He merely contradicts classical values overtly with Marxist mythology while various other meta-narratives lurk in the background.

The first half of the play tackles the issue of war - a conflict into which both sides are locked. In this respect, Bond's adaptation of his subject matter is interesting; in Homer, the Greek expedition is a response to the rape of Helen. Bond neutralises the sexual issue by reifying Helen into a statue of Good Fortune, 'a plain, grey, schematized female shape'[6], and, even although considerable religious scepticism is voiced, no more plausible reason for the conflict is ever advanced. The Athens/Troy duality with its obsessive and bottomless mistrust, reflects more the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, rather than the rich and diverse plurality of the ancient world with its constantly shifting patterns of alliance and conflict. However, as stated earlier, Bond's concern appears to be to present a conflict between different values as represented by individuals or groups of characters.

There would appear to be three main categories: the 'classical' values epitomised in the Greek men - especially Heros; the 'feminist' values of Ismene and Hecuba which join forces with the 'proletarian' values of the Dark Man.

As a type, Heros would have been immediately recognisable to 5th Century Athenians as a typical tragic hero; he embodies the Greek ideal expressed in the verb - αριστευειν - which means, literally, 'to be the best'. Such men and women were driven by overweening ambition either to exalt themselves above their fellows or put themselves beyond the pale by contravening accepted norms of human behaviour. Such 'hubris' or unbridled egotism tended to attract a kind of interest from the gods which rarely, if ever, proved benign. The Athenians identified these mythological heroes above all with those of their contemporaries who strove to achieve political or military dominance; hence, at the extreme, S phocles' identification of Oedipus with the concept of τυραννος - the dictator. The opposition to the heroic ethic is customarily expressed in the drama by the oldest and most essential element in classical tragedy - the tragic chorus who moralise and comment upon the behaviour of the protagonist. It is in the chorus that one finds the voice of the ordinary Athenian citizen extolling the virtues of prudence and balance, respectful of tradition and the gods. On the negative side, the chorus can be short-sighted, selfish, conservative, gregarious and cowardly. This tension between heroic individualism and the collective is a recurrent theme in the history of Athens. In suggesting that Heros provides a total embodiment of the values of the classical world as defined in αριστευειν, Bond's indictment of that world falls by default in that he ignores the more significant ideals of balance and harmony, the ideals and

the practices of democracy and justice which are, by any standards, impressive. In THE WOMAN, the Greek men are, with few exceptions, presented as chauvinistic militarists.

Women appear to be presented as being more rational than men - immune to the masculine infatuation with violence:

> *HEROS:...All women are virgins when they're faced with murder..*[7]

This would appear to hold good in THE WOMAN but not in other Bond plays: Bodice and Fontanelle in LEAR, for example, who are, incidentally, presented as sexually aroused women, positively relish physical violence. Feminist constructions have, however, frequently been placed upon THE WOMAN:

> *The intuitive common sense of the women is in marked contrast to the male leaders who refuse to act in this rational way.*[8]

Bond, however, denies that this 'rational' repugnance for violence bears any essential relationship to gender:

> *Instead of writing from the woman's 'point of view', I tried to treat the women in the play as normal human beings. I showed them as capable of facing and understanding and the resolving the same moral and political problems as men.*[9]

This 'normality' is presumably because the women have not been exposed to the same cultural indoctrination as men. THE WOMAN does attempt to present a cultural alternative to the Greek/Trojan ethos in the island society presented in part two where Hecuba and Ismene take refuge.

> *...Part Two shows a calmer, less inhuman world. The village festival - the song, the dance and the start of the foot race - at once establishes a feeling of natural community life. But Bond does not intend that the image should be idyllic: 'I'm certainly not saying that the community is idyllic. I'm saying that it will have to face the problem of the Greeks. It will eventually be invaded and colonised.' The dance is a simple folk dance...'*[10]

The island society is inadequate mainly because it is unlikely to cope with 'the problem of the Greeks'. Apart from this, however, it is fairly idyllic; the Boys' song presents a culture in harmony with the natural world:

Fish from the sea

White bread from the oven

The green green mountain

For the hairy goat

Goat skin on my shoulder

Fire laughs on the hearth

Bread smiles in the oven

God throws his net

To fish! Fish! Fish!''

In this society, Hecuba and Ismene - as models of 'natural' rationality - find themselves more at home. Although we are given to understand that 'Orvo cheats''[2], overall, the impression is overwhelmingly one of childish innocence. In his presentation of this culture, it is clear that Bond's thinking is dominated not by rationality but by myth - the myth of a golden age, Arcadia, Rousseau's 'noble savage', and in specifically Christian terms - of Eden. Having established, as a basic premise in his thinking, that humans are essentially good and, as children, are born good, Bond locates the origins of evil in the capitalist/militarist structures of the dominant societies in Western culture - represented here by the Greeks.

Just as the islanders exemplify a state of pre-imperialist innocence, so the victory of the Dark Man over Heros symbolises the eventual defeat of imperialism by the oppressed proletariat. This revolution comes about through the intervention of Hecuba who represents the wisdom of History:

> *She becomes an image of human thought and human purpose acting within the developments which are created historically.*'[13]

The problem here lies in the relationship of the individual psychology to the historical dimension. Hecuba's triumph over Heros appears attributable to her understanding of the individual man's auto-destructive tendencies. That this is an individual trait, specific to Heros and not a mass psychology is evident in the fact that her ruse depends upon Nestor and Athens not being similarly disposed. Nestor accepts Heros' death because his leader has developed into an inconvenient, obsessive crank - an expendable embarrassment to the political order he is supposed to represent:

> *NESTOR: The Athenians don't even want his statue.*'[14]

All in all, Athens is better off without him. The historical Athenian democracy was, of course, notoriously quick to dispose of political leaders who fell from favour. Under these circumstances it is difficult to see how the Dark Man's

execution of an obsolete politician can be viewed as the triumph of 'a new proletarian direction in history.' Further, Heros' character is in itself more consonant with pre-capitalist, aristocratic social values than 'democratic', mercantilist ones. This weakens the assertion on the allegorical level, that his destruction represents a victory over imperialism. If anything, the imperialist mentality is better evidenced in the wily and pragmatic Nestor.

Bond's insistent emphasis on the social/historical dimension of his work has led to a significant down-playing of the importance of character and personal emotion. Not only is there a paucity of information concerning this in the script but Bond's own production of THE WOMAN (National Theatre 1978) ignored the area almost completely, with the result that the texture of the drama - which acquires its substance from the web of human relationships involved - never materialised. This is a particular problem where the personal intersects directly with the political. A crucial example of this deficiency is to be found in Part One Scene 2 where Ismene and Heros discuss her forthcoming mission to Troy in their bedroom. It has been decided by the Greeks that, Priam having died and power now in the hands of his queen, Hecuba, a deputation should be sent offering an end to the siege in return for the immediate surrender of the statue. Heros' wife, Ismene, is included to provide the 'female' touch in dealing with Hecuba. This tactic rebounds on the Greeks to the extent that Ismene feels she must deal honestly with the Trojans.

The most significant narrative event in the scene is Heros' response to Ismene's question - if the Trojans return the statue, will he keep his word and depart without killing and looting the city? His response suggests that he will not. Nevertheless, the setting Bond has chosen would suggest that the audience will be given some insight into the marriage of the 'handsomest man' and the 'cleverest woman' - especially as the plot turns upon the nature of their relationship. The dialogue reveals no sign of intimacy and I found the somewhat deadpan way in which the actors delivered the lines confusing - suggesting equally a stylistic device to exclude the personal or, interpreted naturalistically, an indication that the marriage was emotionally null. Although he expresses a desire for children, the scene ends with Heros going out to inspect the lines rather than joining his wife in bed. In scene four, we discover that Ismene has been married for seven years but has no children and in scene fourteen, when she is on trial, she is accused by Heros:

HEROS:...Ismene, I've made love to you but you're still a virgin.'[15]

This apparent sexual incompatibility is surely an important element in Ismene's decision to stay in Troy, as a hostage of the Greeks' good faith, the pressure thereby applied to them being commensurate with the strength of Heros' feelings for his wife. In scene seven, Ismene talks confidently of 'My husband's love for me'[16], yet in the previous scene Heros' emotional reaction to the news of his wife's situation is very hard to assess. Superficially he is frustrated and calculating, apparently more concerned with damage to his reputation:

HEROS:..What sort of a welcome would I get in Athens? Come home with a stone and no wife?[17]

And his protestations about killing himself a few lines later are exposed as humbug by his own qualification and Nestor's patently false devotion:

HEROS:I can't believe they'd kill her. If they did, I'd kill myself. The moment we had the statue.

NESTOR:Athens will need you even more then. I'd offer my own life.[18]

If this is all that he feels, why isn't his supposedly intelligent wife aware of it? Yet an actor could play Heros in such a way as to demonstrate an intensely personal anguish beneath a public mask of icy control. By seeking to subordinate so totally the presentation of the emotional life of the characters in favour of social concerns, Bond arguably achieves the opposite; the repression of this particular dimension serves only to focus attention on it by mystifying it. Why is Ismene not merely a 'dutiful' wife? Why is she prepared to base her entire peacemaking strategy on a wildly miscalculated estimation of her husband's love for her? Why is there no clear illustration of a relationship upon which the narrative turns - such as occurs with the relationship between Hecuba and Ismene, which is fully and movingly represented, especially in Part Two where both women are maimed? Even though he has stated that characters *'who are the agents of history'* must *'also ring true as individuals'*[19], Bond could argue that to raise such questions would be to misread the play in terms of bourgeois individualism. This in turn, however, might lead one to question the efficacy of

Bond's aesthetic - theatre as social change: if the audience need to come to the play already equipped with the correct interpretative perspective (and all Bond's essays, prefaces, interviews, poems etc. show how much he is concerned that they should), what function is left to the play?

In the quotation cited above(pp.111-112), Bond advanced the claim that THE WOMAN reflected an examination and evaluation of the world of classical Greece. The principal concern of the play is to convey historical 'truth', though Bond does make clear that this does not extend to 'details'[120]. Both Hirst and Hay & Roberts make the point that Bond prepared for the writing of the play by reading the entire corpus of classical Greek drama. Had he read Book Ten of Plato's 'Republic', a more rigorous work of rational idealism, he would have discovered that *'the tragic poet, if his art is representation, is by nature at third remove from the throne of truth'*[121]: the dramatist presents a reflected image of a reflected image, and is therefore likely to be unreliable. THE WOMAN makes no contact with the historical 'realities' of classical Greece as these were perceived at the time by such as Thucydides or Xenophon or by modern historians, Marxist or other. On the contrary, as Plato might concur, it exists at a remote fourth remove.

Like Bond, Barker is also interested in history and has written a number of 'history' plays; he is quick, however, to disclaim any pretensions to historical accuracy or 'truth'.

> *I think history is an invention of both left and right. Both are equally false.....When I go to east European countries, I usually go to visit what they call a museum of the working class. And so I did in Prague - an enormous building in which no Czech ever sets foot; so I had it to myself. Having walked past enormous statues of Lenin which dominated a red-carpeted staircase, I then went into endless rooms of photographs, because the photograph is the icon of the artistic sections of the communist authorities, - room after room where people are being shot, hanged, executed, being killed in battles, or cheering their cosmonauts. You realise that the party itself has commandeered the masses by this means: the photograph itself celebrates the individual face but, at the same time, by enclosing it in mass cabinets, the masses are entrapped by the party which claims to speak for them. I find that illuminating for the theatre in that history is always about the extension of the individual and one or other political grouping annexes the idea of the individual for some ideological function. The good history play tries to rescue the individual from that annexation which is what I'm talking about in subtitling THE POWER OF THE DOG as MOMENTS FROM HISTORY AND ANTI-HISTORY. Anti-history is about people who try to resist that occupation.*[22]

For Barker, history is a form of narrative fabricated to serve the ends of its authors which passes itself off as truth - a view diametrically opposed to Bond who finds in history universal truths ('the struggle for reason'). In THE WOMAN, Bond sought to demonstrate how working class strength(the Dark Man) directed by

a correct understanding of history (Hecuba) could bring about a just society through revolutionary action. To Barker this is yet another mythology and the actual experience of history is something else:

> *I believe the experience of history is an experience of pain, the words are interchangeable. Just as the individual in the years following trauma, likes to recall the trauma, so does society insist on reproducing its dislocations, but always in a laundered way which invokes necessity ('the struggle' is a word much beloved of the left. It has lost its meaning, become stripped of its pain, and cloaked in anodyne romanticism) and anaesthetises memory. The individual is robbed of his experience of agony by being forced into a participation he could not at the time recognise, in other words, he is re-individualised. This returns me to the emphasis I place on the individual as the centre of all resistance. Solzhenitsyn tells us that the most successful resisters in Stalin's camps were the religious, when they must have been persistently battered by a conventional wisdom that told them religion was a comic characteristic of pre-civilisation.*[23]

In Barker's plays, History often provokes strong antipathies:

> *SLADE: Is that History trying to get in? Lock the doors somebody, it will have its hands around our throats.*[24]

GAUKROGER: We listened from the tower, I said to Pool, I hope this will not be another skirmish, just cuts and grazes, then we heard the cannonade and I knew, this was History coming over the hill.[25]

Typically, however, his work does not expound a consistent view; Barker tends to focus on the contradictions and conflicts which beset the concept.

FAIR SLAUGHTER[26] is perhaps the earliest of the plays to tackle some of the wider issues of historical consciousness via its central character, Gocher, a hardline Marxist-Leninist. Marxism, however, is only one form of historicist ideology and Barker does explore others in a number of plays - for example right wing nationalism in THE LOUD BOY'S LIFE. One of the remarkable facets of Barker's writing lies in the way one play evolves out of another along a strong line of internal continuity and the 'history' nexus of ideas and attitudes expressed in this play are developed and, in many ways, reinforced in later work. There is, of course, a strong sense of class consciousness in Barker's earliest plays and in CLAW, Noel's father, Old Biledew, develops this into a rigid Marxist-Leninist ideology. Outraged at the apparent 'class-treachery' of his son, the old man smashes a portrait of Karl Marx over his head while Noel is treating his mother to tea in Fortnum and Mason's. He receives a seven year gaol sentence for this gesture because it is assumed by the magistrate to be *'in the furtherance of some misguided notion of class conflict'*[27]. Old Biledew's final appearance shows him dying alone in St Francis' Hospital - *'in the stench of urine and terminal flesh'*[28]. His loyalty to the ideology of class conflict has

condemned him to a life of total personal failure - marginalised, absurd and pathetic.

Biledew is clearly the theatrical prototype of Old Gocher in FAIR SLAUGHTER whom we first encounter as a seventy-five year old murderer decaying in a prison hospital. His biography is traced through a series of flashbacks beginning in Siberia 1920 where he made his first contact with Communism via the Franco-British Expeditionary Force. Young Gocher's initial insight into the nature of capitalism occurs when the allies' entire military machine grinds to a halt because their 'capitalist oil' has frozen. His life-long commitment to Communism is forged when he shares a prison cell with Trotsky's engine driver. This man, known only as Tovarish (comrade), is killed by the Whites and Gocher is given the task of burying the body in frozen Arctic ground. As a symbol of his commitment, he severs the Russian's hand and retains it. The 'present' of the play begins with Old Gocher attempting to conceal the bottled hand from his gaoler, Leary, whom he subsequently persuades to assist him to escape in order to return the hand to the buried body of its rightful owner in Russia. Other flashbacks present Gocher's struggle to maintain his ideological commitment and survive in England from the twenties through the Second World War to the present. He sacrifices personal success as a popular entertainer; his wife leaves him because he puts Russia before her and his relationship with his only child is poisoned owing to his bitterness in the face of consistent political failure. Throughout the play Gocher's antagonist is the capitalist Stavely - his C.O. in Russia and his theatrical manager; later he appears as the owner of a distillery. Leary helps Gocher to escape and, through a delicately portrayed and

highly comical process of sustained mutual deception (one of the most fascinating aspects of the drama), the pair arrive on the Steppes - actually the South Downs - and prepare to lay the hand to rest. At this point the geriatric Stavely appears, having wandered off an old folks outing; he is subjected to an impromtu trial and found guilty by the now thoroughly anti-capitalist Leary. Gocher, however, feels sorry for the old man and intervenes to save him just before dying himself haloed in a beatific vision of Tovarish in glory. Leary runs off with the hand and Stavely is left alive squalidly gloating over a crumpled reproduction Picasso.

The central ideological debate is between Gocher and Stavely. For the former, History is not merely significant - it determines significance, - as his meditations while burying Tovarish indicate:

> *The thing is, Tovarish old mate, the thing is, not how you live but how you serve. Which is why your life has not been wasted. Far from it. Your life - whole streets of people could not match that. You have been a world historical individual. (Pause.) Which I, at the moment, am not. I admit that. I have yet to make a contribution. I'd like to think that I will be as world historical as you were. Though that's a lot to ask for. But it would please me, Christ, it would please me, because I do not want my life to be a nothing, a bit of flesh spewed up on the surface of the earth, a whining, giggling sliver of biology. That is not enough for me. I state that now.*[29]

The concept of 'service' - which can be seen, alternatively, as dignifying 'subservience' - is frequently advanced by certain of Barker's characters: a posture which is then 'tested' in the context of the drama. In the respect of history/pain, Gocher's aspirations are not consonant with English insularity and Stavely's attitude is diametrically opposed:

> *I am personally of the opinion that pain is the dividing line between East and West. The attitude to it I mean. Do you agree? (GOCHER is silent.) The abolition of pain simply does not seem a worthwhile object to them. I would go so far as to say that without it they would feel deprived. Whereas to us, that is the starting point of our national will, the common object of our efforts.(Pause.) I think the national characteristic is paramount in everything. I am certain that Russian socialism, just like Russian feudalism and Russian autocracy, will always make us catch our breath. There is so much pain in them.*[30]

In the light of Barker's equating of History with pain, Stavely's England must work assiduously to evade History; Stavely is aware, however, of the price that must be paid:

> *I believe, you see - I believe that pain is vile. That PAIN is VILE. And in England there is not all that much pain. I would put up with any amount of trivia.... any degree of ephemeral, piddling trivia....any degree of bungling incompetence and amateurishness ...if we as a nation miss the PAIN.*[31]

This view is anathema to Gocher yet its validity is attested in the frustration he experiences through a lifetime in England:

GOCHER: You can tell we are in Europe. The great blood bowl. Can't you smell it? Christ, the blood....the whole place is on a great seepage of blood. Under the grass, under the pavement. Dig down and up it comes, bubbling through the clay!

LEARY:(Getting up.) Murmansk we want, is it? Two singles to Murmansk?

GOCHER: I was not shot, but I still suffered, Leary. No one knows the sufferings of an English idealist.

LEARY: I'll get the tickets. Won't be long.

GOCHER: I used to wonder when I heard of shootings, what if it was me, how would I feel? If I was standing there, in the cellar, against the stone walls.

LEARY: Not very pleasant, I imagine.

GOCHER: On the contrary. You would have mattered. History would have laid her finger on you, or else why would you be there? What is your little life, compared with the significance of being executed? It's your badge. It's your certificate of world historicalness, Leary.

(Pause.) I have lost no blood. No one has sought me out in a cellar, or stopped me on a country road....

LEARY: Until today. They are all after you today. (He goes out.)

GOCHER: All my juices, spent in that dry soil...

(Pause and blackout)[32]

The contrast between the English and central European experience of History is a preoccupation that Barker shares with Howard Brenton - a profound unease about British insularity and ignorance. Brenton brings the two worlds into sharp juxtaposition in WEAPONS OF HAPPINESS[33] where Josef Frank, a Czech refugee and victim of the Slansky Treason Trials, becomes involved in a strike in a London potato crisp factory:

FRANK: I don't sleep. I walk about London. So many people, sleeping. Around you. For miles. After so many years, it is better to be tired. Not to think or remember. Ten million, asleep, around you, is warm. The ignorant English, like a warm overcoat. About me. It is better. While in the nightmare of the dark all the dogs of Europe bark.[34]

In Barker's case, however, there is less interest in making political statements and the focus is firmly on character:

> *I am not a good political writer. I have not, as many writers of the left, a coherent Marxist viewpoint. The contradictions which exist in my work are due to a growing and fixed interest in character and the effect of character on social or moral attitudes.*[35]

> *In FAIR SLAUGHTER I examined the decay of a political ideal in one man through constant friction with that peculiar stability which has characterised our society in this century - a stability which is not, in spite of what we are led to believe, a racial characteristic.*[36]

Gocher's commitment to his political ideal is initiated by his appropriation of the hand, yet this act is in itself a violation: the dead Tovarish resists:

> *TOVARISH:(from the dead.) Kiev...my little garden in Kiev...*
>
> *GOCHER: Kiev?*
>
> *TOVARISH: My allotment by the railway tracks....*
>
> *GOCHER: I don't see what that has to do-*

TOVARISH: Who's going to dig my garden?

GOCHER: What I'm asking you, Tovarish, is would you mind-

TOVARISH: WHO WILL DIG MY GARDEN! IT WILL GO TO SEED!

(Pause)

GOCHER: Well,I...I don't...

TOVARISH: MY DAHLIAS!

GOCHER: Christ, Tovarish...

TOVARISH: KIDS WILL TRAMPLE ON MY DAHLIAS....!

GOCHER: Your hand....give me your hand....I only want your hand...

TOVARISH: OH, MY POOR BLOODY DAHLIAS!

GOCHER: I want your hand! (He quickly seizes the spade, and putting his foot on TOVARISH's wrist, brings the spade across it with a thud. Pause. He opens his eyes, slowly looks down, astonished.) No blood.... (He bends down, picks up the hand, gazes at it gingerly, then stuffs it in his greatcoat pocket....)[37]

Gocher's view of Tovarish's significance - *'a world historical individual'* - is challenged here by the dead man himself who struggles to assert his personal individuality; it is not estrangement from the railroad of history that gives rise to the Russian's cri de coeur, but private grief for the abandonment of his flowers and his allotment. Gocher refuses to hear this and the emotional basis of his intellectual undertaking is permanently tainted by this repression. In stagecraft terms the business of excising the hand from a talking corpse conveys this dilemma extremely effectively. It is a violation. In the context of 'history', this particular moment exemplifies a typical preoccupation in Barker's oeuvre - the relationship between the living and the dead. Firstly, there is the device of endowing the dead with articulacy. This also occurs in Barker's next play - THAT GOOD BETWEEN US - in which a police torturer, taking his paraplegic daughter for a walk on Wimbledon Common, encounters the corpse of one of his victims which talks to the girl:

> *CORPSE: THEY TIED ME TO A CHAIR. POURED PETROL UP MY NOSTRILS. TWISTED COMBS IN MY HAIR.*
>
> *VERITY: That rhymes!*
>
> *CORPSE: I DID NOT SPEAK! I HAVE NEVER KNOWN SUCH PAIN. TELL THEM I NEVER SPOKE.*
>
> *KNATCHBULL: Verity. Sweetheart.*
>
> *VERITY: I'm sorry, I've got to go.*

CORPSE: TELL SOMEBODY ABOUT MY PAIN![38]

THE LOVE OF A GOOD MAN(Sheffield Crucible 1978) is set on a First World War battlefield which is in the process of being converted into a military cemetery by a none too scrupulous funeral contractor; the play is permeated with a concern for 'the fallen' (one of whom is actually exhumed from the mud on stage) which climaxes in a bizarre seance. Perhaps the most striking example of the articulacy of the dead is to be found in the dramatic monologue DON'T EXAGGERATE[39]:

> *In that case it is the voice of someone who has suffered not only in his own life but also, in being revived and given an intense level of articulacy, actually plays with the living...plays the a-historicity of his own existence to the audience.*[40]

Those who suffer and die in wars are perhaps the ultimate victims of history:

> *Like a passion that one day just ceases, destroyed by its own duration, a question burns out and is replaced by an unquestioned state of affairs. A country which lay bleeding from a war or revolution stands suddenly intact and whole. The dead are implicated in this abatement: only by living could they recreate the very lack and need of them which is being blotted out.....History takes still more from those who have lost everything. For its sweeping*

judgements acquit the unjust and dismiss the pleas of their victims.History never confesses.[4]

It would appear that Barker considers speaking for the dead to be an overpowering imperative for the artist. In SCENES FROM AN EXECUTION, set in sixteenth century Venice, the artist, Galactia, has been given a commission by the state to paint 'The Battle of Lepanto'; she refuses to represent the event in an appropriate celebratory manner but depicts a slaughter. After being taken to task about this by the critic Rivera(she will 'needlessly' offend the political establishment), she is left in the darkness of her temporary studio:

GALACTIA: Sitting through the dark, thirty feet aloft on creaking boards, with moths gone barmy round the candles, someone's got to speak for dead men, not pain and pity, but abhorrence, fundamental and unqualified, blood down the paintbrush, madness in the gums -

VOICES OF THE CANVASS: The Dying - The Dying -

GALACTIA: The Admiral is a hypocrite. Humility my arse.

VOICES OF THE CANVASS: The Dying - The Dying -

GALACTIA: Algebraic. Clinical. Shrivelled testes and a sour groin.

VOICES OF THE CANVASS: The Dying - The Dying

GALACTIA: The soldier does not smell his own lie but repeats the catechism of the state, bawling pack of squaddies yelling male love -

VOICES OF THE CANVASS: THE DYING! THE DYING!

GALACTIA: The painter who paints for the government recruits the half-wit and stabs the baby in its mess.

VOICES OF THE CANVASS: THE DYING! THE DYING![42]

Through listening to the voices of the dead, Galactia feels obliged to reject the view of History which the Venetian establishment wants her to paint; she sees that to lie about the past is to perpetrate future slaughters. Her painting offends and she is thrown into prison. The art critic, Rivera, however, functions as a br ker between the artist and authority, 'selling' the painting to the Doge:

Now, listen to me, and I will tell you what I know, as a critic, and a loyal supporter of your party and your cause. In art nothing is what it seems to be, but everything can be claimed. The painting is not independent, even if the artist is. The picture is retrievable, even when the painter is lost.....[43]

Finally, artist and painting are triumphantly re-habilitated and the Doge has come to an intellectual accommodation:

> *It is a great nation, is it not, that shows its victories not as parades of virility, but as terrible cost? My brother accepts he is a calculating man, but admirals must be! You have winkled out his truth, he is full of admiration for you, hands notwithstanding! Will you dine with us? I hate to miss a celebrity from my table.*[44]

The work of art may move profoundly contemporary individuals - even forcing some such as the admiral to redefine themselves - as individuals; as individuals, however, the dead have been robbed of their sufferings which have been absorbed into the history of the complacent state.

As the Doge's words suggest, in Barker's plays, it is the politicians who are most obsessed with History. In THE POWER OF THE DOG[45], an historical moment is presented in the first scene where the audience are shown Churchill and Stalin carving up the post-war world. Barker's treatment is not at all reverential and the tone is predominantly farce.

> *So grotesque was the politics enacted at this moment in history that I could neither view it objectively nor discover a tragic form for it. The inescapable baseness of power broking on this scale commanded a satirical response, and it remains perhaps the finest satirical scene I have attempted arguably dwarfing the anti-historical scenes that make up the bulk of the play....*[46]

Churchill presents Stalin with a sword to commemorate Stalingrad and Stalin, having heard of Churchill's liking for Scots comedians, lays on a Scots comedian who, like the fool in 'King Lear', keeps up a 'witty' running commentary. Two interpreters endeavour to combine diplomacy and decorum with veracity but communication degenerates as Molotov persists in proposing toasts. Churchill blusters pompously, dazzled by the 'historic' role he thinks he is playing:

> *CHURCHILL: Is it not an awesome power, ask him, that no-one in this continent, no child nor woman, shall live without our caveat?*
>
> *DIPLOMAT: He doesn't mean caveat...he means...*
>
> *CHURCHILL: No medieval prince, howsoever unrestrained, could reach down as we do -*
>
> *DIPLOMAT: Not caveat - surely -*
>
> *CHURCHILL: - into the lives of the as yet unborn, and stir their entrails.....history.....history....hold my hand...hold my hand...(He extends it in a drunken passion to STALIN, who does not reciprocate) IS ANYBODY TRANSLATING THIS? (People are drifting away)*[47]

The malapropism ('caveat' instead of 'fiat') is ironically appropriate given the anti-historical focus of the play. In Churchill's case, power is the ultimate

goal of personal ambition and he is besotted with the symbols and paraphernalia of tradition; the historical self-image he aspires to is that of the 'unrestrained' medieval prince whom he surpasses merely in the extent of his fief. Stalin, in contrast, claims to have *'emptied the cupboard of his personality'*[48].

> *STALIN: There are only two classes of person able to be unreservedly themselves, to follow the absolute dictation of their personality. The supremely powerful and the utterly insane. It is the power of Marxism-Leninism that prevents me sliding from one to the other.*[49]

He believes that he embodies the wisdom of Marxism-Leninism which has supplanted and become his personality. Although 'supremely powerful', he serves Lenin - later he talks of Lenin as the architect with himself as foreman: he is the 'dog' of the play's title. In a scene entitled 'The Spontaneous Nature of Historical Decisions', Stalin solves 'the landlord question in Estonia' by ordering them to be transported to Transcaucasia in ammunition trucks: he does this without advice or consultation in a shockingly casual fashion while discussing the finer points of a materialist musicology. He is also a mad dog. His cynical definition of History - *'The incredulous overwhelmed by the incredible'*[50] describes his personal modus operandi. He is afraid, not of death, but of being posthumously expunged from historical record: in this respect he resembles Gocher in FAIR SLAUGHTER and, in THE LAST SUPPER (Royal Court 1988), the prophet, Lvov:

LVOV: I am not afraid of death only oblivion. (Laughter again) Do you think I lived this terrible life to be forgotten?[61]

Structurally, THE POWER OF THE DOG functions on two levels - there are the 'historical' scenes with Stalin and the 'anti-historical' scenes set 'somewhere in the Polish Plain' with the Support Unit, 72nd Motorized Division of the Red Army. This second level represents 'anti-history' in showing how a group of individuals attempt to cope with history - the ravages of World War II. The unit's political officer, Sorge, a believer in the Revolution, encounters an attractive Hungarian model/photographer, Ilona, who has collaborated freely with both sides in order to continue being photographed against a background of atrocity. Through all extremities, Ilona believes that she leads a 'charmed life' - she possesses in herself the strategy for coping with history - a strategy based on her femininity:

ILONA:.....Shall I tell you what I believe? I believe that every murder is an acquiescence, and every victim possessed the means of her escape. I believe in your eyes and in your mouth you own the means of your salvation, whether you want to be loved, or whether you want to be saved. At the door of the restaurant, or the gate of the camp.....

You walk through History.....in polished shoes....you dance on tanks....you don't refuse.....and if you die you may not feel it.....arbitrary, you can't conceal it....but only if the shot comes from the back.....if you can catch his eye....you're all right, Jack...[62]

To anyone who thinks it is a mystery, how we cope with so much history, I say the answer lies in pain, what my mother went through I can again. Swallow the monster and don't strain, murders from the Bosphorous to the Hebrides render all complaints absurdities. Don't ask what makes the system, if it is a system, work, cover your indignation with your foot, don't think that black stuff is burned bodies, really it is only soot.....[53]

Like Barker, Ilona considers 'history' to be 'pain' and her strategy for dealing with this involves not only fooling others but - as the final comment above indicates - fooling herself too. Ilona's conscience appears to have been resigned to the keeping of her twin sister, Hannela, who was as emotionally open as she is closed. In her first scene, Ilona suddenly realises that the hanging corpse she is posing next to is her sister and that the Russian NKVD officer who arrests her, Sorge, was Hannela's lover. Sorge, having examined Ilona's photographic collection, has ample evidence to execute her as a collaborator. The situation therefore provides her survivalist philosophy with a challenge:

SORGE: If, when all the smoke has blown away, and Arkov has gone home to his wife, the old black rats of Europe shake the brick-dust from their fur and creep out into the light, what was it all worth, Arkov's blood? What was it worth?(Pause)

ILONA: I think you knew my sister...

SORGE: I have stood in doorways in the drizzle, watching a guilty lightbulb throb through dirty curtains, Mayakovsky in one pocket, a Sitka .45 in the other, and hour after hour kept warm from knowing there was a child somewhere whose life would, but for my vigilance, be spoiled like all his ancestors had been spoiled until Comrade Lenin got his fingers round the mad dog's throat...(Pause) First, there is rebellion, which is easy, and then comes service, which is hard...

ILONA: She said that, didn't she? History is a mad dog, I know that's her...(Pause)
When the mad dog comes for you
Don't run, you'll only stumble.
Instead, lie down and show your throat,
Some dogs don't bite the humble...

SORGE: You have a dirty face.

ILONA: She had clear eyes, eyes which made lying impossible.

SORGE: I can give you soap.

ILONA: And a smell like apples. Not like me. My bad breath is legendary. I think your smell comes from your soul, don't you? You blame the bowel, but really the bowel is only-

SORGE: (Tossing a piece of soap). Wash yourself.[54]

The references here to the mad dog of History clarify the significance of the play's title. For Sorge, the Revolution marked the beginning of mankind's attempt to control the ravages of History, an exercise in the service of which he is currently engaged. There is a stark contrast between his professed attitude and Ilona's philosophy of personal survival founded in the mystique of her sexuality. In the quotation cited above, Ilona, who watches closely the eyes of her opponent, uses the mystery surrounding her sister's death in order to establish an emotional complicity with Sorge. In the event, Sorge succumbs - apparently drawn to an ethos which entirely contradicts his own:

> *SORGE:....When I set eyes on you...the mud splashed on your calves and your crushed shoes I felt - how pure she is...through all this clamour she walks untouched....*
>
> *ILONA: What do you want me to -*
>
> *SORGE: Shh...shh...*
>
> *ILONA: I'm perfectly happy to be your -*
>
> *SORGE: (waving a hand). Shh...(pause) I felt...she is unspoiled by History....(Pause) I want you to <u>want</u> to be my mistress...(Pause)*[55]

Sorge commits himself by neglecting to act on the evidence he possesses which obliges him to execute Ilona as a Nazi collaborator; the ideology in which he

has invested a lifelong passion collapses and the transgression itself eventually costs him his life. However, he suspects that Ilona's attachment to him is mere survivalist complaisance: in evading history, she evades pain and he wants proof of her love in suffering:

SORGE: You agree so much it makes me suspicious.

ILONA: It's a habit, it's, I - real feelings become - after so much - become - impossible to -

SORGE: Perhaps you should resist me -

ILONA: Perhaps I should, yes -

SORGE: Resist me, then!

ILONA: Any thing that has substance will be snapped, and anything that hasn't can't be. She had substance, didn't she. So much substance I really hated her -

SORGE: I insist you are yourself -

ILONA: I am trying -

SORGE: No, you are hiding, you are hiding something, no one can be so -

ILONA: I am, I am myself -

SORGE: Let me make some mark on you, what are you, a saint! (He kisses her violently, painfully. Pause)

ILONA: I think she killed herself. She did. She killed herself to get away from you.[56]

When he is arrested, he declares his love and asks Ilona to reciprocate: she is silent, refusing the challenge to match his commitment. It would appear therefore that she has successfully resisted his attempts to force her to abandon her strategy - a strategy which is her personality. She does reveal here, however, a chink in the armour of her charisma - a flash of hatred for her sister's 'substance' and a resentment that Sorge seems to want her to become Hannela. Like Gocher in FAIR SLAUGHTER, Sorge has subordinated his personal relationships to ideology; he can cope with the recriminations of discarded conquests like Tremblayev but is stunned by Hannela's ultimate gesture of suicide. For a mixture of diverse motives, he and Ilona collude in the substitution which is symbolised by the soap which Sorge offers and she accepts (she is presented obsessively washing).

Although Stalin is characterised overwhelmingly as the maker of History, he is haunted by residual personal emotions:

> *STALIN: I would give up all the authority I possess to meet a beautiful woman on a train.....*
>
> *It is a sad fact I cannot meet a woman on a train unless both the woman and the train are commandeered for me. But of course that entirely removes the significance of the occasion. Accident, which is the essence of experience, has been eliminated from my life....*[57]

His awareness of imminent death has been instrumental in bringing about this mood of profound dissatisfaction with the sterility of his existence. Having surrounded himself with lies and sycophants, he is prey to feelings of unreality and paranoia:

> STALIN: There are no mirrors to Stalin. Only his portrait sycophantically done....(he turns)Who will know me when I'm dead![58]

It is this that prompts his demand for a photographer to be plucked at random from the Polish plain who will photograph him 'as he really is'. In the 'Spontaneous Nature of Historical Decisions' scene referred to above which

demonstrates the considerable emotional investment of the dictator in music, Stalin had regretted to loss of his sex drive. Thus Barker prepares carefully the final scene where his two central protagonists confront each other - **History Encounters its Antithesis**: the photographer selected is, of course, Ilona. This represents the ultimate test for her, but, although we know she has already coped successfully with Heydrich, her strategy has come under pressure from Hannela and Sorge.

Stalin's interest flickers - has he encountered his woman on the train? Ilona's assertiveness treads the dangerous dividing line between the charming and the offensive and her subject finds the encounter bracing although he is unable to resist playing on her fear:

> *STALIN: I enjoy frightening people. Isn't it odd that a man of my stature should enjoy frightening little girls from Budapest?*[58]

In this context,however, it seems all too natural and Ilona's facade cracks when the dictator casually indicates that he is fully aware of her circumstances:

> *STALIN: I understand that you are under sentence of death.(Long pause. She slides a film plate across. Then she emerges) Lieutenant Sorge had evidence that you posed on a mass murderer's lap.(Pause)*
>
> *ILONA: Oh?*

STALIN: For some reason the lieutenant neglected to act on the evidence. He continually filed your case to the back.

McGROOT: They do that, doon't they, it's called desire. How do ye knoo when a man loves you? He puts flowers on yer grave. A'VE SEEN IT HAPPEN.

STALIN: Why, I wonder?(Pause)

ILONA: You should ask him. Now, how about a profile

STALIN: I don't think we can do that, can we Poskrebyshev?[60]

In this extremity, Ilona impulsively makes the kind of personal commitment the studious avoidance of which has hitherto comprised the basis of her philosophy: she pleads with Stalin to save Sorge. As she herself immediately realises, the gesture is both hopeless and counterproductive in that it undermines at a stroke the precarious rapport she has established with the dictator, thereby jeopardising her own chances of survival. The catalyst for Ilona's transformation is a moment of terrible confusion and crisis but the underlying forces are the death of Hannela and her affair with Sorge: she pleads for him - not for herself. But as photographic session breaks up, Barker has one more savagely ironic image to leave the audience with at the end of the drama:

ILONA: (closing her eyes) Am I going to die?

STALIN: (turning) Dying? Who said anything about dying? (He turns to POSKREBYSHEV) Have you been frightening Miss - (he loses the name) with tales of dying? I cannot go for a piss without Poskrebyshev taking advantage of my absence to throw his weight about. What are you, a sexual pervert? (He turns to ILONA. He extends his arms. She falls into them) There...there...

ILONA: Are we safe...

STALIN: There...

McGROOT: Oh, Christ, it kills all comedy, I have no jokes for it.[61]

Ilona's closing of her eyes reflects her defeat (*'if you can catch his eye....you're all right, Jack..'*); she has become the passive victim she was wont to despise: according to her sister's philosophy -

When the mad dog comes for you
Don't run, you'll only stumble
Instead, lie down and show your throat,
Some dogs don't bite the humble...[62]

Whether she lives or dies, Stalin's comforting gesture is grotesquely ironic.

Before moving on to the next section of this study. I would like briefly to generalise on some of the points raised thus far. Bond and Barker share what might be called an oppositional stance: both hate 'the world' as they find themselves confronted by it and both have focussed that hatred on the political establishment. For a time in the seventies and early eighties both were considered to be left wing 'political' dramatists. Both commenced their careers by writing what the Royal Court seemed to want - shocking, social realism dramas of contemporary lower class life. Both subsequently reverted to forms of writing which owed more to their own creative fantasy and the classic European literary tradition than contemporary observation. Here, however, the resemblances begin to end. In Bond's case, this reversion was typically sudden and violent: in EARLY MORNING(1968), his 'freedom play', he produced a grotesque fantasy which made few concessions to any conventional notions of the theatrical text. In production, this failed. Possibly in response to the 'moral' debate occasioned by SAVED(1965) and the failure of EARLY MORNING, he then proceeded to subject his creative imagination to an increasing conscious and rigorous discipline, his ideas being influenced in the main by Brecht. With THE NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH(1968), Bond seemed to have forged a literary/poetic style leading on to a series of plays - LEAR(1971), THE SEA(1973), BINGO(1973), THE FOOL(1975) - which met with a degree of critical success that established his status as a contemporary classic. It is also significant that - unlike EARLY MORNING those involved in producing these plays, particularly the directors, understood clearly the Royal Court/Brechtian principles of their stagecraft. Bond claimed that the series explored and set out 'the problem'; with THE BUNDLE(1978), he began another series - this time of 'answer plays'. These fell well short of their predecessors in terms of success because the increasing emphasis on didacticism

rendered them undramatic and lacking in imaginative depth and subtlety. Bond's overriding concern was to convince audiences of the validity of his social and political views: a declared Marxist perspective of history and the need to establish a 'rational' society - i.e. replace capitalism with socialism.

Barker did not achieve the same *succes de scandale* as Bond, nor consequently the same measure of subsequent *succes d'estime.* Instead, he experimented with different theatrical forms - moving from satire to an attempt at a West End style play - STRIPWELL(1975). Thereafter, he wrote a series of plays for the RSC Warehouse - THAT GOOD BETWEEN US(1977), THE HANG OF THE GAOL(1978), THE LOUD BOY'S LIFE(1980) - which were consonant with that particular theatre's enthusiasm for 'political' drama. This came to an end with the RSC's rejection of a commissioned script - CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES - which did not reflect a direct concern with current political realities and which posed problems in terms of current performance theories and directorial orthodoxies. Barker was moving away from 'reality' towards his own particular style of fantasy. The RSC has since performed Barker's work on two occasions - the 'Barker season' of CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES, DOWNCHILD, THE CASTLE(1985), - and THE BITE OF THE NIGHT(1988) - enthusiasm for the work coming largely from actors, the RSC establishment undertaking these out of a residual sense of commitment to the writer and as a sop to deflect criticism from the theatrical press of the otherwise blatant commercialism of their artistic policies. Since then, the performance of Barker's work has tended to be 'actor-led' principally in the form of Joint Stock voting to stage plays like VICTORY(1983) and THE POWER OF THE DOG(1984); more recently The Wrestling School, a company dedicated to performing

Barker, has evolved through the agency of former Joint Stock actors. Unlike Bond, whose plays have been subjected to increasing rational control, Barker's work has become progressively more 'free' - 'dreamplays' - to use a somewhat superficial and unsatisfactorily catch-all term. In complete contrast to Bond, Barker insists that it is the artist's duty to be irresponsible, that the space of art is a privileged one where moral speculation and play are possible, that the artist is licensed to exhibit his/her talent which is imagination - not science whether this is political, social, economic. psychological or whatever.

In both writers one finds their particular mind-set reflected in their practice. From the start, Bond's work comes to us within a particular 'frame' - i.e. with reference to a particular moral project leading on to a well defined set of values. In the case of SAVED, the frame was the well known retrospectively written preface but from EARLY MORNING on there is invariably a 'moral' and articulate voice in the play (occasionally voices) which clearly put the dramatist's view - a view which becomes more and more precise and insistent. In Barker the voice of the writer can be deduced from the satire, his central figures - from the outset - possessing no privileged status. Later work is characterised by a definite absence of 'frame' with a plurality of articulate voices from the different characters. Bond shows his characters fixed or moved by forces beyond their control in a cruel world - his plays are full of bound images. Barker's characters are all lent articulacy which is the practice of freedom. Bond mistrusts language, preferring the concrete, physical image. Barker insists on the relationship between the dignity accorded speech and human liberty. Bond insists on the dominance of the social perspective to the extent

of repressing the personal, while, for Barker, the personal is the focus of his interest.

It has been the work of Bond's 'middle period', however, which has struck a chord with the theatre practice of the seventies and eighties in Britain. The dream of a 'rational theatre', a 'theatre for the Scientific age'[63], proposed by Brecht, seized upon by the moral crusaders of the Royal Court and academic establishments worldwide and championed to the uttermost by Bond himself, will quite probably appear to future theatre historians as a curious and quaint anachronism. It cannot comprehend Barker and therefore finds him insupportable. Perhaps the central irony of the whole 'rational' phenomenon focusses on Brecht's contention - also propounded by Bond - that the field of culture lags behind the development of the physical sciences, that the new scientific thinking has not been brought to bear on human relations. In fact, both Brecht and Bond's supposedly 'scientific' thinking belongs essentially to the nineteenth century, their 'reason' being grounded in a Newtonian universe of absolute space and absolute time regulated by absolute mechanical 'laws' of cause and effect. 'Rational Theatre' is a stranger not only to contemporary Chaos Theory but also to Quantum Theory and even to Einstein's Theory of Relativity evolved almost a century ago. It is to the upheavals in cultural theory concomitant with and consequent upon such scientific alterations that I wish to turn in the next section and to investigate the possibilities of an 'Irrational Theatre'.

IRRATIONAL THEATRE

The Challenge Posed by the Plays of

Howard Barker for Contemporary Performance

Theory and Practice

Three Volumes

Volume 2. Seduction

By Charles Lamb

For the Degree of PhD

Joint School of Theatre Studies

University of Warwick

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SECTION TWO: Seduction

CHAPTER FOUR: Postmodernism and Theatre

It could, with justification, be claimed that the foundations of the technologically advanced world we live in today are laid upon reason. This technological progress can be traced back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Age of Reason, and the formation of the great intellectual 'disciplines' which have informed it. As one first encounters them today, discourses such as Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Economics, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Linguistics, Politics, History, Archaeology, etc manifest themselves as repositories of abstract, truth-based structures which underlie and *in-form* the world of superficial appearences. If the internal coherence and rationality of these discourses were insufficient of itself to convince, one is confronted everywhere with the overwhelming evidence of their works; in a similar way the ubiquity of Christian institutions in Medieval times must have served to confirm the faith in all but the most sophisticated of sceptics.

Each of these discourses has defined its field, set up its boundaries, established procedures and validation processes for determining its truths and for those authorised to disseminate them. Interlocking with the discourses are political and social power networks. Also, the discourses themselves are

concerned directly with power, in that (and here the physical sciences tend to serve as a paradigm for the others) they aim to provide the possesser of knowledge with the capacity to manipulate and control. This latter is perhaps the ultimate touchstone of validity for 'scientific truth'.

In the introductory essay to his text, 'The Age of Enlightenment', Isaiah Berlin characterises the social project of the eighteenth century rationalists thus:

> *But they also believed, if anything even more strongly than their empiricist adversaries, that the truth was one single, harmonious body of knowledge.....that all the sciences and all the faiths, the most fanatical superstitions and the most savage customs, when 'cleansed' of their irrational elements by the advance of civilisation, can be harmonised in the final true philosophy which could solve all theoretical and practical problems for all men everywhere for all time.*[1]

In itself, perhaps, a laudable and noble ambition. However, the project is fraught with danger: one person's reason can be another's irrationality. It is reason's totalising and totalitarian aspect that should inspire a level of caution. Hegel was aware of this in his description of 'rational' ontology:

> *Reason is the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality ...*

> *It demonstrates itself to be this along the path in which first, in the dialectic movement of 'meaning', perceiving and understanding, otherness as an intrinsic being vanishes.*[2]

Or, as Bond puts it more bluntly:

> *Our species can no longer live with the irrational.*[3]

> *The struggle for rationalism is of course against irrationalism. That's why it may have to be violent.*[4]

Necessarily, one of the first tasks reason set itself was the defining, confining and 'curing' of madness. Nor has reason's essential purpose - the reduction of the other to itself, difference to identity - been substantially deflected by charges of ethnocentrism.

In the second half of this century, however, a massive work of discursive deconstruction has undermined the integrity and the truth-based authority of all the 'rational' disciplines. This attack has been levelled at their theoretical bases with critical distances being established through *traduction* (critical concepts from one discipline are deployed *against* another, e.g. linguistic concepts in psychology - Lacan) and, most spectacularly, through assisted

autocatalysis (a critical concept is deployed against itself - Derrida excels at this - or for that matter a whole discipline - the history of history, the repressions of psychology - Baudrillard). Foucault, in particular, demonstrated the possibilities of what might be dismissed as mere 'theory' by writing such alternative discourses - 'Madness and Civilisation - A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason' as well as all his famous 'archaeologies' of the human sciences. The whole apparatus of the truth-producing machine has been turned, finally, against itself - to reveal? The elliptical, the aleatory, the arbitrary political expediency, an ultimate evasion which constitutes a betrayal of its proper dialectic. In almost all cases an original act of violence, a founding repression. The destabilising effects of this intellectual revolution have so far been delayed by a phase of political reaction whose motor drive has been economic performativity.

And the shock waves of deconstruction are potentially as devastating as those of the theory of relativity. It takes some effort to realise the extent to which our 'world' is not merely grounded in, but fabricated by these authoritative discourses. What is 'the human' when we remove Biology, Psychology, Sociology and History? - originally grids for analysing the human but latterly models for fabricating the same, our understanding of ourselves and each other is permeated with assumptions derived from these disciplines. Furthermore our conception of the human is fleshed out and continually reinforced in the 'realistic' fictions of the mass media. Whether these are satisfying voyeuristic or escapist impulses, providing vicarious sadistic gratification or the reassurance of the known, the mode of representation seeks almost invariably -

within the constraints imposed by its function, its 'formula' - to achieve authenticity - i.e. recognition. Television, in particular, exhibits two convergent processes - the authentication of the fictional and the fictionalising of the authentic. In the latter, the real - such as 'fly-on-the-wall' style documentary or a sporting event - is processed according to rules of dramatic presentation - exposition, build-up of suspense around a central event, resolution etc. Not only do such fictions 'explicate' human behaviour but they almost invariably moralise it and provide role models. There is a fascinated dialectic between the real and realistic fantasy, whereby each seeks fulfilment through absorption in the other. One of the principal agents in the appropriation of the real has been advertising and the principal strategy of marketing has been to redefine reality in terms of a consumerist ideal: no longer does advertising promote a particular product but total lifestyles; their targets longing for the pure happiness which these images project eagerly strive for stereotypical status. (Such is the strength of this dialectic between the real and realistic fantasy that hysterical fears are generated around the issue of media control.)

Baudrillard has characterised this process as the extinction of reality in *hyperrealism*:

> *Reality itself founders in hyperrealism, the meticulous reduplication of the real, preferably through another, reproductive medium, such as photography...*

> *A possible definition of the real is: that for which it is possible to provide an equivalent representation.....At the conclusion of this process of reproduction, the real becomes not only that which can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced: the hyperreal. But this does not mean that reality and art are in some sense extinguished through total absorption in one another. Hyperrealism is something like their mutual fulfillment and overflowing into one another through an exchange at the level of simulation of their respective foundational privileges and prejudices....*
>
> *In fact we must interpret hyperrealism inversely: today, reality itself is hyperrealistic.*[5]

In the face of this level of appropriation, a culture of conventional political opposition is - in any radical sense - redundant.

Within the grid established by the physical sciences, the individual subject is further defined by the economic system in terms of 'needs'. Yet these 'needs' are themselves products of the system:

> *Needs are not the actuating(mouvante) and original expression of a subject, but the functional reduction of the subject by the system of use value in solidarity with that of exchange value.*[6]

This point is particularly important as capitalism's usual self-justification is that the 'free market' responds to the individual's needs and is thereby the ideal instrument for promoting the happiness of the individual. Yet, in practice, the 'free market' has long been abandoned:

> *..in addition to deciding what the consumer will want and will pay, the firm must take every feasible step to see that what it decides to produce is wanted by the consumer at a remunerative price. And it must see that the labour, materials and equipment that it needs will be available at a cost consistent with the price it will receive. It must exercise control over what is sold. It must exercise control over what is supplied. It must replace the market with planning.*[7]

For the individual, the utopian 'free market' is reduced to 'choice' which is in turn reduced to 'what one can afford'. In respect of production, Post-modernist critiques also part company with Marxist thought which has always abetted Capitalism in endorsing production as such. Marxist political economy's point of contact with the individual, the subject, lies in the concept of 'use value' which is postulated over against 'exchange value'; it is, in fact, the crucial referent of the entire system. Yet Marx takes it as being self evident. Baudrillard demonstrates that the concept of use value is an idealisation which provides the 'alibi' for the rest of Marx's political economy. This complicity has been a major factor in leading so much radical oppositional thought to abandon Marxism.

> *Every revolutionary perspective today stands or falls on its ability to reinterrogate radically the repressive, reductive, rationalizing metaphysic of utility.*[3]

'Utility'(Baudrillard), 'performativity'(Lyotard), 'functionalism', 'accountability' - all watchwords in the current intensification of the economic war - express the essential moral imperatives of our time. The ultimate horror may be that the system no longer needs the discourses that created and sustained it - that it can continue ceaselessly proliferating in an intellectual void - totalitarian and unopposible because, the last vestiges of reality having been destroyed, there exist no possible grounds for opposition.

It is in this respect, however, that some have seen a significant role for Art - one of whose traditional postures has been to oppose 'Life'. Lyotard, for one, lays special stress upon this:

> *- I believe it is absolutely obvious today, and has been for quite some time that, for one thing, the reconstitution of traditional political organisations, even if they present themselves as ultra-leftist organisations, is bound to fail, for these settle precisely into the order of the social surface, they are 'recovered', they perpetuate the type of activity the system has instituted as political, they are necessarily alienated, ineffective. The other thing is that all the deconstructions which could appear as aesthetic formalism, 'avant-garde' research, etc., actually make up the only type*

> *of activity that is effective. this is because it is functionally - the word is very bad, ontologically would be better and more straightforward - located outside the system; and, by definition, its function is to deconstruct everything that belongs to order, to show that all this 'order' conceals something else, that it represses.*
>
> *B.D: To show that this order is based on no justifiable authority?*
>
> *- Yes.*[9]

Lyotard's dissatisfaction with the term 'function' betrays an unease about appearing to prescribe a specific 'role' for the aesthetic, whereas it is the very absence of a function which can enable the aesthetic to evade appropriation. In his examination of the aesthetic in the works of Foucault, Derrida, and Lyotard, David Carroll coins the term paraesthetics for this movement:

> *Paraesthetic critical strategies posit no end to art and no end to theory, because their ends are intricately intertwined and, thus, constantly in question within and outside each. The task of paraesthetic theory is not to resolve all questions concerning the relations of theory with art and literature, but, rather, to rethink these relations and, through the transformation and displacement of art and literature, to recast the philosophical, historical, and political 'fields' - 'fields' with which art and literature are inextricably linked.'*[10]

For any art, and we are considering here the question of theatre, the problem of form is crucial. The principal mode of almost all popular television/film/theatre fiction is realism - the simulation of prima facie authenticity. In the light of the theoretical position outlined above it is useless as a vehicle for a radical, critical art. It is, however, the dominant popular form not only in 'democracies' but it is also the only genre with which totalitarian states can feel comfortable; it lends itself easily to academicism - the purveying of 'messages', ideology, role models etc. but one of its chief functions is reassurance:

> *Industrial photography and cinema will be superior to painting and the novel whenever the objective is to stabilise the referent, to arrange it according to a point of view which endows it with a recognisable meaning, to reproduce the syntax and vocabulary which enable the addressee to decipher images and sequences quickly, and so to arrive easily at the consciousness of his own identity as well as the approval which he thereby receives from others - since such structures of images and sequences constitute a communication code among all of them. This is the way the effects of reality, or if one prefers, the fantasies of realism multiply.''*

To 'decipher' 'quickly', and 'arrive easily at the consciousness' of one's own 'identity' is, as I will show later, the exact opposite of Seduction which defies interpretation and puts into question the sense of identity. Elsewhere Lyotard argues that a central distinguishing feature of realism is that it intends to avoid the question of reality. Key features are immediate accessibilty and essential conformity with existent values and codes. A good example of this is

the way new writers for theatre or television have their work 'shaped' to the requirements of the medium:

> *Under the common name of painting and literature, an unprecedented split is taking place. Those who refuse to reexamine the rules of art pursue successful careers in mass conformism by communicating, by means of the 'correct rules', the endemic desire for reality with objects and situations capable of gratifying it. Pornography is the use of photography and film to such an end. It is becoming a general model for the visual or narrative arts which have not met the challenge of the mass media.*
>
> *As for the writers who question the rules of plastic and narrative arts and possibly share their suspicions by circulating their work, they are destined to have little credibility in the eyes of those concerned with 'reality' and 'identity'; they have no guarantee of an audience.'*[2]

Leftist theatre practitioners have tended to argue a distinction between 'naturalism' and 'realism' on the basis that the former is imbued with reactionary bourgeois individualist values while the latter presents a progressive socialist perspective. David Edgar, among others, has advocated this form of 'realism':

> *the dominant form of television drama is naturalism, which shows people's behaviour as conditioned, primarily or exclusively, by individual and psychological factors. The socialist, on the other hand, requires a form which demonstrates the social and political character of human behaviour.'*[13]

Edgar sees drama here as a vehicle for ideology and advances the somewhat simplistic notion that whereas the individual and psychology are appropriated, the social and the political are per se oppositional. Edgar's posture, like Bond's(the ideological artist), is essentially academicist: Edgar(the Marxist) 'knows' the truth and Edgar(the dramatist) will undertake to convey this truth to the unknowing via a demonstration (the drama). This position raises a number of questions: why can't the truth be conveyed directly? - why this detour of the demonstration? As a purveyor of truth, there is always the problem that this kind of drama will find itself in the permanent position of being a pale substitute for documentary where the possibilities for 'reality' are so much more impressive - the difference between film of the event itself and the 're-construction with actors'; it can never be more than 'representation'. When drama becomes instrumental in this way, it must tend to lose its experiential integrity and its degradation is inevitable. There is also a whole complex of moral dilemmas which pivots around the relationship of those who possess knowledge(and thereby power- i.e. Edgar - ideologist and dramatist) to those who do not ('the masses' - see quotation below.) It is no longer a matter of 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' - but rather the truths they are capable of absorbing, the truths they need to know, truths that will not 'lower their morale at this particularly acute stage of the struggle'etc. The so-

called 'elitist' artist does not face this set of problems in that he/she tends to assume dialogue only with equals - i.e. he/she 'communicates' 'irresponsibly'only on his/her own terms: the responsibility of understanding is left with the audience.

Ironically Edgar was forced to admit that this stylistic shift(socio-political realism versus 'psychological' naturalism) was ineffective:

> *However, in the television age, the masses are so swamped by naturalism and, therefore, by its individualist assumptions, that the superficially similar techniques of realism are incapable of countering individualist ideology. The realist picture of life, with its accurate representations of observable behaviour, is open to constant misinterpretation, however 'typical' the characters, and however total the underlying social context may be.'*[14]

This somewhat comical agonising was very typical of many proponents of political theatre. It highlights the difficulties which face an ideological art that aspires to anything other than reinforcing the status quo. The realism/naturalism distinction is, in the work itself, meaningless i.e. 'realist' and 'naturalist' productions appear identical. Style is about appearances. As Edgar indicates, the realism/naturalism distinction occurs at the level of interpretation. 'Typical characters' in Socialist dramaturgy become 'stereotypes' when Socialists wish to criticise bourgeois drama. Edgar, however, is clearly in the grip of the 'realist' delusion ('accurate representations of observable

behaviour') that realism truly 'reflects' reality - when it is, in fact, as much a system of signs and conventions as any other art form; as I have indicated above, realism is characterised by its forms being so 'conventional', decoding being so rapid and easy, that its signs appear transparent.

Brecht was well aware of realism's redundancy as a radical artistic genre and indeed, with his alienation theory, he seems to have gone to considerable lengths in the opposite direction: audiences are to be continually alerted to the fact that the representation they are witnessing is *not* real. Brecht's objections to realism were that audiences used it as a vehicle for escapism, or marvelled at the virtuosity of its authenticity. Where his critique intersects with Lyotard's, lies in their awareness of the reassuring, anodyne effect of realism - it does not encourage a critical state of mind. As a Marxist, however, Brecht felt compelled to rationalise his dramaturgy and argued the case for a 'scientific' theatre where audiences would be presented with 'representations' which would demonstrate and comment on various social, political, historical interactions; he attempted to avoid the simplistic totalitarian audience relation of Social(ist) Realism by forcing a critical stance upon the audience through the use of alienatory devices. The problem here lies with the posture of rational detachment; what are the emotional transactions being conducted between audience and performance? The tensions between the polarities of reason and repressed affectivity often lead to an uneven mixure of cynicism and sentimentality. Brecht's rationalism performs the same controlling function as Bond's or as Edgar's Marxism - it is, theoretically, the organising principle of his artistic method. When Brecht succeeds in adhering to his ideological purpose,

his representational 'experiments' are rigged so that any real critical response from his audience is circumvented. This is probably why he has been so popular with educationists who like creating learning structures which offer the semblance of 'open' inquiry but which are in effect rigged to produce the 'correct' knowledge. Brecht's declared intention was to instruct his audiences in viewing man as an object of science; in practice, however, his dramaturgy is a battle between the scientific and the aesthetic impulses.

One of the most unfortunate aspects of Brecht has been the influence of his 'theory' - especially in Britain. In particular, his schematised generalisations of the 'two-legs-good: four-legs-bad' variety, have become cliches not only of the liberal/left theatrical consensus but also of Theatre Studies pedagogy in educational establishments. This kind of thing -

DRAMATIC FORM OF THEATRE	*EPIC FORM OF THEATRE*
Plot	*Narrative*
Implicates the spectator in a stage situation and wears down his power of action	*Turns the spectator into an observer but arouses his power of action*
the human being is taken for granted he is unalterable eyes on the finish	*the human being is the object of the enquiry he is alterable and able to alter eyes on the course*

one scene makes another	*each scene for itself*
growth	*montage*[15]

The principal distinction between these two forms is the organising principle of the narrator who structures events for the audience via montage and is therefore in a position to unify and resolve contradictions. In dramatic form, there is no narrator, only participants; the structuring principle can only be immanent development from a given scenario - not necessarily growth, it could be decay. The drama then relies on the conflict of irreducible opposites. On the strength of this, Drama would appear to be less of a propaganda medium than Epic. And of course propaganda aims to arouse its targets to action. It is not my purpose to argue the specific case against Brechtian theory here (I will consider Brecht at greater length later)merely to note that its pernicious effects have lain in establishing these moralised dual categorisations. One of the most damaging examples of this tendency of leftist thought has been the individual/collectivity opposition whereby the former concept has been denigrated in favour of the latter(see David Edgar above); the effect of this has been to allow the forces of political reaction to represent themselves as the champion of the individual - a highly dubious proposition.

I have, so far, attempted to sketch the intellectual landscape which Barker's work inhabits: though his writing is at home in the wider context of post-modernist deconstruction, the immediate context of the British theatrical establishment is characterised by archaic theory and practice - as well as an almost total absence of intellectual curiosity. In the light of deconstruction,

I have indicated some of the central problems of contemporary theatrical practice through a consideration of the major mode of artistic production - realism, glancing briefly at the Brechtian alternative. Deconstruction is a term used by Sandy Craig in his book on alternative theatre, DREAMS AND DECONSTRUCTIONS[16]. It is clear, however, that he does not use the term in the sense that I have outlined it - i.e. as it is practiced by the French *maitres à penser*. For Craig deconstruction involves substituting 'truth' for the 'lie' - in practice, socialist truths for capitalist lies. Radical deconstruction, however, rejects the truth/falsehood dialectic. Critical activity is not carried on by selecting an alternative ideological 'position', but rather discourses are turned against themselves in a movement of pure inversion or are employed against each other to effect their mutual destruction. These are deconstructive strategies. To 'demythologise' - the declared aim of much political theatre - is not to deconstruct because, against the myth, it postulates a reality/truth value - 'this it how it really was/is'. If one does not share the ideological perspective of the demythologiser, then one myth has been merely substituted for another. If reality itself has been appropriated by the exchange-value system, this does not comprise a valid oppositional strategy.

To the extent that its presence has been registered on the British critical scene, deconstruction has been charged with being nihilistic and purely destructive. Against this it is possible to argue that deconstruction is positive in that it comprises a continuous movement of intellectual liberation. The deconstruction of authoritative discourses opens up a space in which desire can perpetually reinscribe itself anew. By liberation, I mean, the process of freeing

humans from deterministic notions such as historical, social or biological conditioning. It is above all the mind that conditions and we can do something about that.

It is perhaps not too fanciful to compare our situation today to the period of the Renaissance: in the collapse of the Medieval Christian 'world' we can glimpse the current collapse of the 'world' of scientific reason. In both cases, a space opens up in which the nature of the human once more becomes an issue and a possiblity. In this regard, Peter Szondi's description of the 'project' of the 'Modern Drama' could offer an appropriate contemporary poetics of the theatre:

> *The Drama of modernity came into being in the Renaissance. It was the result of a bold intellectual effort made by a newly self-conscious being who, after the collapse of the medieval worldview, sought to create an artistic reality within which he could fix and mirror himself on the basis of interpersonal relationships alone.*'[17](my emphasis)

Szondi sees the drama as a device for providing a perspective on the human. Particularly important is the relegation of the world of objects:

> *Most radical of all was the exclusion of that which could not express itself - the world of objects - unless it entered the realm of interpersonal relations.*'[18]

In the case of the contemporary world, such an exclusion would include objects such as the authoritative discourses discussed above. For Szondi the dramatic world proper was a world of subjective and inter-subjective expression:

> *By deciding to disclose himself to his contemporary world, man transformed his internal being into a palpable and dramatic presence.*'[2]

The term 'dis-closure' focusses effectively the difference between Szondi's Drama (which I would argue is also Barker's) and the dramaturgy of a Brecht or an Edgar. The former aims at *disclosure* - an opening, an expression which assumes a continuation of dialogue and likewise a continuation of the process of meaning. The latter aims at closure - the purpose of the play is to convey a pre-determined set of fixed ideas - arrested meaning. Szondi's drama is radically heuristic and exploratory. It is not necessary for a dramatist to profess an ideology in order to write important plays; the view that the individual who eschews ideological commitment must of necessity be in the grip of an ideology is per se an ideological view. It will probably be the case that an important dramatist will be familiar with dominant ideologies but he or she will usually tend to exceed them - to stand outside, and where a dramatist is ideologically committed and feels the need to convey his/her views, then this will generally be the least *dramatic* part of the work; we are all familiar with those moments when characters obviously become mouthpieces - when there is not an equivalent element of contradiction.

> *The dramatist is absent from the Drama. He does not speak; he institutes discussion. The Drama is not written, it is set. All the lines spoken in the Drama are dis-closures. They are spoken in context and remain there. They should in no way be perceived as coming from the author.*[20]

In short, nothing is 'authorised'. It may be objected that this overt absence of the author/creator is merely a formal absence, that he/she by 'pulling the strings' of the characters, consciously or subconsciously is still conveying a view laden with consequent ideological values; the absence of a narrator merely serving to conceal the communication of such 'messages', thereby communicating them all the more effectively. And of course, it is a favoured critical game to find evidence in the text which 'proves' such ideological biases - the presence or absence of 'political correctness'. But these are of course 'readings' and the fact that, in the case of sophisticated texts certainly, such readings can be many and contradictory would tend to counter the assertion that all texts are intrinsically ideological. If it is possible to advance widely different political readings of a text, - to what extent can one claim that the text itself is 'value-laden'? On the other hand where there is a narrator to communicate the authorial view - as, for example, in certain plays by Brecht and Bond - the possibilities for diverse readings are correspondingly reduced.

For Szondi, the Drama does not seek to 'reflect' or re-present 'reality'; it is itself and happens always in the present. For this reason, audiences should not

distinguish performers from roles - as prescribed by Brecht. Lear is not a representation of Lear - he is, uniquely, Lear. Because the 'real' world is admitted only in so far as elements of it are filtered through the characters, then authoritative discourses are only perceived as objects of human consciousness - created, sustained and destroyed through those consciousnesses. The individual subject is primary - all the rest is secondary. This relegation of the external enables the drama to generate its own movement - an element which is identical to Aristotle's recommendation of unity of action. Barker's plays have increasingly tended in the direction of this model. (He has stated that he does not plan what he writes and does not know how the action he is engaged in at any one time will turn out.) A group of characters are presented along with a scenario which they then proceed to work out. The scenario is invariably 'distanced' both for the audience and the characters themselves, - usually the circumstances are either catastrophic or immediately post-catastrophic, presumably because such ruptures conveniently dispose of the normalising, reassuring, socially enforced patterns of daily existence which we take for 'reality'; (the catastrophic is frequently described by those experiencing it as 'unreal'.)

The dialectical, relational character of this dramatic model must necessarily express itself in the dialogue; language, therefore, is of primary importance and takes precedence over all the other elements of production. As such, it must accept the burden of responsibility for the anti-realistic project of the drama; a stylised, poetic speech is essential. Other aspects such as the visual are subordinate to language and their function is to situate and clarify speech. The

Brechtian notion of 'gestus' where utterance is merely part of a dramatic totality occupies a less significant role in such a poetic dramaturgy. In fact, the whole notion of 'languages' of the body or of design needs to be treated with considerable circumspection. Language is unique and no other system of signs is remotely equivalent to it. The problem with 'gestus' is that it is appropriated and belongs essentially to hyperreality. It is possible to 'play' with 'gestus': Handke does so in THE RIDE ACROSS LAKE CONSTANCE but the effect of this is merely to expose the aporia of realism and the real. If language is the fundamental structuring process of human experience, then any fundamental reorganisation of that experience must occur at the linguistic level. The process of this stylisation is to defamiliarise reality by exposing the medium (language)to consciousness:

> *Literature characteristically works on and subverts those linguistic, perceptual and cognitive forms which conventionally condition our access to reality itself. Literature thus effects a twofold shift of perceptions. For what it makes appear strange is not merely the 'reality' which has been distanced from habitual modes of representation but also those habitual modes of representation themselves. Literature offers not only a new insight into 'reality' but also reveals the formal operations whereby what is commonly taken for 'reality' is constructed.*[21]

It may perhaps be objected that one is here reducing drama to the level of 'literature' and there has, in fact, been a widespread view within current theatre which rejects the significance of the literary element in drama(and

consequently neglects the primary vehicle for that element - the voice - in favour of the visual.) The notion of 'performance' has been elevated in its place. Yet the literary element is essential to the tradition of European drama and to refuse literature is to refuse engagement with that tradition. When Aristotle emphasises that tragedy is essentially 'action', it is for the purposes of defining it over against epic which involves 'reportage'(narration). Δρᾶν , whence 'drama' is derived, Aristotle informs us,[22] is the Doric equivalent of the Attic verb πράττειν; the primary meaning of this ubiquitous lexical item is 'to pass through'[23]. It would appear that Aristotle's distinction is between events which are happening **now** and events which are being reported - the present and the past tense; both, however, are speech events. His conception of drama as an essentially linguistic phenomenon is made clear in his discussion of the elements of tragedy where spectacle and music are relegated to the end of the list:

> *Of the remaining pleasurable elements, the music is the most important, and the spectacle, however seductive, is the crudest and least germane to the poetry. For the power of tragedy exists independently of performance and actors...*(My emphasis)[24]

And again later, when he argues the superiority of tragedy to epic:

> *Also tragedy can achieve its effect without movement - just as well as epic - since its qualities are apparent from reading it.*[25]

In fact, the principal argument against tragedy which Aristotle is anxious to deflect here is that tragedy depends upon the 'vulgar' element of spectacle because -

> *Epic is said to appeal to cultivated readers who do not need the help of visible forms...*[6]

In fact, Aristotle accepts the argument that the 'realisation' of the text is a debasement but counters the criticism by saying that this element is not essential. The fundamental distinction between the epic and the dramatic lies, not in the ascription of performance to the latter, but in the figure of the narrator - present in the epic, absent in the dramatic. The epic is the narrative organisation of past events - the principle of organisation is a single viewpoint (the narrator's, a 'worldview'). Drama is organised in the present around irreducible conflict - there is no ultimate reconciliation in a universe which is inexorably chaotic.

Aristotle's contempt for performance is excessive and no doubt reflects the inferior standards of the theatre in his own day which was reduced to the depressingly familiar practice of 'rejuvenating' classics with gimmickry. It is doubtful whether Aeschylus, Sophocles or Euripides would have shared his aversion but it is equally certain that they would have rejected any notion of a theatre which decentred the poetic text. Barker's emphasis on literary style which contrasts sharply with the 'theatre of inarticulacy' as expressed most notably in Bond's SAVED or numerous other dramas of working class life, - should

not be seen therefore as 'undramatic' but rather as restoring language to its rightful pre-eminence in theatre which aspires to the status of a radical art form.

I have attempted to argue that Barker's use of the dramatic form is uniquely appropriate to the anti-ideological, deconstructivist moment in that it presents a decentred, purely relational world which goes beyond the quiescent fantasies of realism without the support of any authorising discourses. What does support Barker's aesthetic discourse? Or is it - as Derrida[27] asserts all literature should be (in every sense of the word) - 'insupportable'? The problem with the outright rejection of realism is that what most people regard as their direct experience is structured by Baudrillard's 'hyperrealism'. This is why much avant-garde art can appear totally alienating; it bears no resemblance to 'lived' experience. Ortega y Gasset complains of this 'dehumanization':

> *By divesting them of their element of 'lived' reality, the artist has blown up the bridges and burnt the ships that could have taken us back to our daily world.*[28]

In the case of drama, however, the problem of apparent dehumanisation can be overcome through the actors, who need to 'live' their roles with the same degree of total absorption as that demanded by Stanislavsky; albeit Barker's characters function according to a completely different 'rationale'. The alienation occasioned by the anti-realistic style is thereby counteracted, though not negated, by the very 'human' interactions between the characters. The actors

'total identification' with their roles should serve to **seduce** the audience into the emotional life of the plays. In all of this the key concept is **seduction**; **seduction** is the 'rationale' or 'non-rationale'; **seduction** is to Barker's dramaturgy what alienation is to Brecht's.

CHAPTER FIVE: Seduction

From the moment that we place desire on the side of acquisition, we make desire an idealistic(dialectical, nihilistic) conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of an object, a lack of the real object.....

Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the ***subject*** *that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing....*

Deleuze & Guattari: ANTI-OEDIPUS(Athlone 1984)p.25,26.

Seduction is the action of pure desire - i.e. not 'willed'. In so far as it presents a deflection which all forms of truth-based discourse must repress, it is a concept frequently encountered in deconstructive readings. In normal parlance it is associated, almost exclusively, with calculated attempts to obtain sexual favours. In deconstruction the scope of the term is wider. Baudrillard begins his essay 'On Seduction' -

Seduction is that which extracts meaning from discourse and detracts it from its truth.'

Under which circumstances, repression or resistance might appear perfectly reasonable or legitimate. However, deconstructive discourse is concerned to interrogate what we mean by 'reason', 'legitimacy' and - above all - 'truth'. Particularly problematical is the question of authority and Jacques Derrida has advanced a critique of the Western philosophical 'logos' - from Plato to Lacan - which demonstrates how the logos - essentially a chain of writings - grounds itself in a conception of truth as self-evident speech. Derrida traces this tradition back to the Socratic dialogues where truth is described as 'a writing in the soul', the revelation of which is imparted via the speech of an authorised teacher to genuine disciples - the original seduction. This notion of truth is related to Derrida's critique of the much more insidious, ubiquitous illusion of self-presence which haunts Western discourses. Derrida's critique derives from Heidegger's attempt to reconstitute the original structure of being through an etymological scrutiny of the different verbal forms of the concept(Sein - dasein - 'being'). However, where Heidegger perceives a semantic plurality which nevertheless combines to form a meaningful 'original' totality, Derrida perceives a diverse group of signifiers which have drifted together into an arbitrary concept which has established the central problematics of Western thought without being interrogated itself. According to Saussure, language signifies through a system of difference - a lexical item has no meaning in itself, no plenitude; it only defines itself in relation to the system of linguistic difference of which it is a part. In spite of his own argument, Saussure continues to defer to the notion of self-presence derived from

phonetic speech in the incorporation within his system of the 'signified' and the 'referent' which infer the independent existence of a 'world' separate from language. According to Derrida, this conception of meaningful self-presence derives from the 'moment' of utterance when language can appear transparent in the light of thought (Cogito ergo sum). Any form of language, however, consists of signs which refer elsewhere and, although speech can appear transparent, when considered within the frame of a general semiology, it loses this privilege. This comprises one of the most significant claims advanced by Derrida: specifically that the whole of our epistemology consists of a writing which clings to an illusion of an immanent, self-present meaning ultimately derived from speech.

Derrida reverses this hierarchy and regards speech as a form of writing. His most important concept in characterising the operation of writing is 'differance'. This could be seen as fabricated in antithesis to 'being'(in the sense of self-presence): this coinage subsumes the Saussurian concept of difference as constitutive of meaning but also incorporates the semantic range of the word 'defer' - especially in the sense of 'putting off/delaying' and 'acknowledging authority'. In fact, Derrida's linguistic and philosophical views are analogous to developments in twentieth century physics with the Newtonian universe framed in an Absolute Space and an Absolute Time giving way to a general relativity where phenomena exist solely in relation to an observer(i.e. they exist only 'referentially').

This substitution of differance for self-presence is not the only reversal with regard to deconstructive readings of written texts; there are numerous other discursive practices clustered around this same linguistic nexus of 'truth'/'self-presence' which require critical scrutiny. For example, there is the 'literal'/'metaphorical' antithesis; the former term has been conventionally 'privileged' as a 'proper' or 'true' adequation of a term to its referent, while the latter has been relegated to the status of decorative artifice. Yet, from a diachronic perspective, metaphoricity is fundamental to the development of a language - i.e. historically all words are metaphors, - though whether they overtly present themselves as such is a different matter. The 'literal' effect, which is closely linked to transparency, is invariably the product of a 'superficial' reading - which, for practical purposes, is all that most forms of reading require. It does not, however, 'exhaust' any text - as twentieth century hermeneutics demonstrates.

I have referred to 'truth' in terms of Derrida's conception of self-present meaning but I wish to enlarge upon the semantic range of the word as it figures quite significantly in this discourse by way of antithesis to seduction. For Heidegger, whose whole philosophic enterprise involved recovering an authentic knowledge of ' being' from its fallen contemporary state, truth was not confined to mere 'adaequatio'(equivalence of words and things). The ancient Greek word for truth, αληθεια, he etymologised as α - ληθεια: the α prefix meaning 'not' and ληθεια being derived from the verb λανθανειν usually translated into English as 'to lie hidden'. He therefore conceived of 'truth' as essentially associated with 'unconcealment'. Heidegger related this to

'appearances' (φαινομενα- phenomena); a φαινομενον, however, was not 'mere appearance' but according to Heidegger:

> *..appearance....does not mean showing itself; it means rather the announcing-itself by something which does not show itself, but which announces itself through something which does show itself.*[2]

The 'truth-based discourse' 'reads' all phenomena in this way and attempts to penetrate to the law or organising principle behind appearances; this is a question of authority, of control. Even psychoanalytic discourse which can subvert manifest discourse does so in the interests of apprehending the 'truth' of the former. Baudrillard -

> *Interpretation is that which, shattering appearances and the play of manifest discourse, will set meaning free by remaking connections with latent discourse.*
>
> *In seduction, conversely, it is somehow the manifest discourse, the most 'superficial' aspect of discourse, which acts upon the underlying prohibition (conscious or unconscious) in order to nullify it and substitute for it the charms and traps of appearances. Appearances, which are not at all frivolous, are the site of play and chance taking the site of a passion for diversion - to seduce signs here is far more important than the emergence of any truth.*[3]

Baudrillard advances the theoretical hypothesis that seduction is the ultimate 'reality' in the sense that it encompasses all 'truth' discourses whose image and paradigm he sees in the process of production. It is to this area that he directs the polemical weight of his discourse:

> *Everything is seduction and nothing but seduction.*
>
> *They wanted us to believe that everything was production. The leitmotiv of world transformation, the play of productive forces is to regulate the flow of things. Seduction is merely an immoral, frivolous, superficial and superfluous process: one within the realm of signs and appearances; one that is devoted to pleasure and the usufruct of useless bodies.....*
>
> *Production merely accumulates and is never diverted from its end. It replaces all illusions with just one: its own, which has become the reality principle. Production, like the revolution, puts an end to the epidemic of appearances. But seduction is inevitable.*[4]

The world of production must repress the action of seduction, marginalise it, trivialise it or reduce it; seduction's potency is evidenced in its persistence - in spite of an apparently all powerful rationality, it will not be exterminated. It is in the light of seduction theory, bearing in mind Derrida's conception of discursive 'truth' as defering ultimately to a self-present speech, that I wish to consider the theatrical moment.

There is a final issue relating to the fundamental structures of the Western 'logos' and the various truth-based discourses its has spawned which seems to me to be of particular importance with reference to Barker's plays and to the drama in general - especially according to the theoretical model postulated by Szondi in 'The Theory of the Modern Drama'(cited in the previous section). This particular critique achieves its most articulate expression in the work of Emmanuel Levinas.[5] Levinas argues that the 'logos', from its Greek origins, has constituted itself on authoritarian lines; it has been concerned with power, comprehension, 'grasping' - above all, the reduction of the Other to the same. The traditional theoretical polarities of subject and object comprise the essential relationship of this thought. The project of reason is to eliminate the Other, reduce it to Same, and thus it finds itself haunted by a curious solitude and thinkers frequently have to fend off the suggestion of solipsism. For Levinas, however, the accusation is apt:

> *Solipsism is neither observation nor sophism; it is the very structure of reason.*[6]

The alternative relation proposed by Levinas is of a desire which is respect and knowledge of the other **as other**. Derrida expresses the relation thus:

> *Neither theoretical intentionality nor the affectivity of need exhaust the movement of desire: they have as their meaning and end their own accomplishment, their own fulfillment and satisfaction within the totality and identity of the same. Desire, on the contrary, permits itself to be appealed to by the absolutely irreducible exteriority of*

the other to which it must remain infinitely inadequate. Desire is equal only to excess. No totality will ever encompass it. Thus, the metaphysics of desire is a metaphysics of infinite separation.....Here there is no return. For desire is not unhappy. It is opening and freedom.[7]

This is an **ethical** relation; an ontology founded not in the subject-object polarisation but in the subject - other. Nor is this what conventional metaphysics would term intersubjectivity which is an essentially solipsistic reason's concession towards others - the concession that certain existents which are primarily objects for me are, for themselves, subjects like me; this can be subject to a variety of ethnic, religious, sexual, species qualification. Such a concession is merely an extension of the process of reification to comprehend and assimilate the other to the same. It is to those non-authoritarian modes of relating to and knowing the other, marginalised and repressed by the power discourses of our social institutions, that Barker's drama returns us and Baudrillard's essay 'On Seduction' points a finger. This is not to say that Barker does not concern himself with authority - obviously power relations are of central importance. The point is that relations of whatever character are not mediated through 'authorised' discourses.

This includes social 'morality'; ethics cannot be reduced to a system of abstract and universal dos and don'ts. Levinas:

> *The fixed point cannot be some incontestable 'truth', a 'certain' statement that would always be subject to psychoanalysis; it can only*

> *be the absolute status of an interlocutor, a being, and not of a truth about beings. An interlocutor is not affirmed like a truth, but believed. This faith or trust does not designate here a second source of cognition, but is presupposed by every theoretical statement. Faith is not the knowledge of a truth open to doubt or capable of being certain; it is something outside of those modalities, it is the face to face encounter with a hard and substantial interlocutor who is the origin of himself, already dominating the forces which constitute him and sway him, a you, arising inevitably, solid and noumenal, behind the man known in that bit of absolutely decent skin which is the face, which closes over the nocturnal chaos and opens upon what it can take up and for which it can answer.*[8]

Barker's ethical position takes the relation with the other as its focus. In THAT GOOD BETWEEN US, the action of the drama shows a Britain descending into the nightmare of a police state. The key aspect of this decline is not this or that political agenda or ideology, but the readiness of individuals to sacrifice all the affective ties and bonds of interpersonal relations in the interests of furthering or preserving their own status as defined by power or ideology. 'That good between us' is the 'faith or trust' that Levinas refers to above and which is, according to him, the foundation of morality. Similarly in THE UNFORSEEN CONSEQUENCES OF A POLITICAL ACT, one of THE POSSIBILITIES, Judith insists that her killing of Holofernes was 'a crime' because she spoke desire to him.[9] The fact that she has saved her race, that Holofernes was a military butcher about

to massacre them all, is neither here nor there and cannot mitigate or abate her personal guilt.

I have tried to suggest, very briefly, some of the ways in which truth-based discourses have been problematised. As I hope to demonstrate, *on the one hand,* Barker's texts in their divergence from 'truth/-reality/authenticity' principles' actively call these into question; *on the other,* the major acting and production discourses employed in contemporary theatre actively pursue these very principles - Stanislavsky, Brecht, Grotowski et al deploy the 'jargon of authenticity' to an extent, it could be argued, that they depend on it. I believe that this has led to difficulties in staging Barker's plays.

Baudrillard essays to describe the processes of seduction and I shall outline these here because it will be necessary to refer to them when I consider Barker's texts. The first, and perhaps the most important concept is the secret.

> *The secret: the seductive and initiatory quality of that which cannot be said because it is meaningless, and of that which is not said even though it gets around. Hence I know the other's secret but do not reveal it, and he knows I know it but does not let it be acknowledged: the intensity between the two is simply the secret of the secret.*'[9]

Common sense thinking equates the secret with the 'thing concealed' and that's that. In focussing on the thing, it fails to acknowledge the process, for when the secret is known, it is, by definition, no longer secret. Baudrillard's point is that the secret exercises a fascination, a power which both manifest discourse and psychological discourse invest in an object. The secret can operate in many ways. Baudrillard asserts that the pope, the grand inquisitor and the great Jesuits or theologians knew that God did not exist and that this secret was their secret strength, the foundation of their power. Similarly, in discussing how 'trompe-l'-oeil' exposes 'reality' through an apparent excess of reality, he cites the trompe-l'-oeil studiolos of the Duke of Urbino, Frederigo da Montefeltre, in the ducal palaces of Urbino and Gubbio. Baudrillard argues that these spaces are a 'reverse microcosm' where space is actualised in simulation; this exposes the 'secret' of the ducal power:

> *A complete reversal of the rules of the game is in effect here, one which would ironically lead us to think that, through the allegory of the trompe-l'-oeil, the external space of the palace and beyond it to the city, as well as the political space, the actual locus of power, would perhaps be nothing more than a perspective effect. Such a dangerous secret, such a radical hypothesis, the Prince must keep to himself, within himself, in strict secrecy: for it is in fact the secret of his power.*
>
> *Since Machiavelli politicians have perhaps always known that the mastery of simulated space is the source of power, that the political*

is not a real activity or space, but a simulation model, whose manifestations are simply achieved effects.[11]

A further example of the seductive power of the secret cited by Baudrillard is to be found in Kierkegaard's 'Diary of a Seducer'. A young girl is perceived as an enigma; to seduce her, the seducer must in turn become an enigma to her. The seduction resolves the affair without disclosing the secret. It could be argued that the 'true' meaning was sexuality, yet there was nothing in the place where others might have perceived sex:

And this nothing of the secret, this unsignified of seduction circulates, flows beneath words and meaning, faster than meaning: it is what affects you before utterances reach you, in the time it takes for them to vanish. Seduction beneath discourse is invisible; from sign to sign, it remains a secret circulation.[12]

Baudrillard insists that there is no active and passive in seduction - no subject and object. Within the framework of rationalist causality, seduction evidences itself as the irruption of the irrational, operating instantaneously in a single movement which is its own end. In order to seduce, it is necessary that one be seduced oneself. The challenge is illuminating in this respect:

To challenge or seduce is always to drive the other mad, but in a mutual vertigo: madness from the vertiginous absence that unites

> *them, and from their mutual involvement. Such is the inevitability of the challenge, and consequently the reason why we cannot help but respond to it: for it inaugurates a kind of mad relation, quite different from communication and exchange; a dual relation transacted by meaningless signs, but connected by a fundamental rule and its secret observance. The challenge terminates all contracts, all exchanges regulated by law (the law of nature or the law of value) and substitutes for it a highly conventional and ritualised pact. An unremitting obligation to respond and outdo, governed by a fundamental rule of the game, and proceeding according to its own rhythm. Contrary to the law which is always written in stone, in the heart, or in the sky, this fundamental rule never needs to be stated; it must never be stated. It is immediate, immanent, and inevitable(whereas the law is transcendental and explicit).*[13]

I have quoted this paragraph in full because it describes several important aspects of the processes of seduction - challenge, the duel relation, vertigo, madness, the suspension of 'normal' constraints and the substitution of a pact, the obligation to exceed. All of these are of crucial importance in 'reading' Barker's plays and understanding the apparently irrational behaviour of his characters. Another significant aspect of the duel relation is the bluff which often amounts to fooling oneself in order to fool the other. This is implicit in Baudrillard's statement:

> *To seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion. It is to be taken in by one's own illusion and move in an enchanted world.*[14]

> *The strategy of seduction is one of deception. It lies in wait for all that tends to confuse itself with reality.*[15]

These assertions also have clear implications for the business of acting.

Seduction goes further than this in its contravention of power/reason. Baudrillard asserts that it annihilates power relations not only because to seduce is to weaken but because we seduce **with weakness**:

> *We seduce with our death, with our vulnerability, and with the void that haunts us.*[16]

Seduction is never a matter of using strength. Once initiated seduction offers the permanent possibility of total reversal; this is part of its charm and its risk. One of the most obvious convergences of Baudrillard with Barker is in respect of the dead. Baudrillard:

> *They are only dead when echoes no longer reach them from this world to seduce them, and when rituals no longer defy them to exist.*

> *To us, only those who no longer produce are dead. In reality, only those who do not wish to seduce, nor be seduced, are dead.*[17]

The dead abound in Barker's plays. Barker:

> *An ugly struggle goes on over the dead. They beckon to the living because their 'sacrifice' (which it never is) is employed to justify further 'sacrifice'. They are forever calling more people 'over'.*[18]

In the 'world' of seduction, the dead can be very much alive. The etymology of the Ancient Greek word for seduction - ψυχαγωγειν(psychagogein) - is interesting in this respect since the primary meanings cited in the lexicon (Liddell and Scott) are 'to be a conductor of the dead', 'to evoke or conjure up the dead'.

One of the most insistent assertions Barker makes is that the individual is not finally and necessarily determined.

> *The individual as the product of deterministic historical and economic forces leaves serious art with nothing but stereotype and ideology, all dead rhetoric. The individual remains the only source of imaginative recreation of society.....We need to see self as a potential ground for renewal and not as something stale and socially made.*[19]

However, freedom and the capacity to change do not arise through the workings of a solipsistic and determined rationality, but through the seductive duel/dual relation with the irreducibly Other. Rationalists may object that the world of seduction is unpredictable, hazardous and irresponsible. Seduction would reply that this is substantially the case but that the 'security' which reason claims to offer is a delusion(in itself dangerous) which nevertheless exacts a high price in terms of desiccation and banality.

I have suggested that the processes of Seduction are generalised throughout Barker's work. This is not to argue that seduction is somehow the 'essence' of Barker or indeed that seduction is being recommended as some sort of alternative ideology. My point is that our responses to drama - as to the rest of life - are never purely empirical; we bring to it a host of preconceptions and expectations which determine our 'reading'. I have suggested that authoritative 'rationalist' discourses influence these preconceptions to a degree of which we are not always fully aware. Further, that there are effective processes which I have generally designated under the name of Seduction the operations of which 'rational' discourse marginalises or represses in the interests of maintaining the closure of its own structures. The affective impulse behind this movement locates itself in the appetite for reassurance which develops with mass interdependency. The seductive processes, however, are experienced as intrinsically 'dramatic' because in any such encounter,the sense of challenge, the sense of a massive opening of possibilities, energises the participants.

Barker has persistently referred to his theatre as 'a theatre of catastrophe'.[20] Most of his plays are set in catastrophic circumstances either immediately before or immediately after fairly massive social breakdowns. This enables him to detach his characters from the normalising structures of social and economic interdependency thereby opening up the range of possible behaviours. Catastrophe, however, according to Baudrillard, goes much further than this: it abolishes causality:

> *It submerges cause beneath the effect. It hurls causal connections into the abyss, restoring for things their pure appearance or disappearance (as in the apparition of the purely social and its simultaneous disappearance in panic). This is not, however, a matter of chance or indeterminacy; rather it is a kind of spontaneous connection of appearances, or of the spontaneous escalation of wills, as in the challenge.*[21]

Alternatively, in the world of causality there is no catastrophe but only crisis. Similarly, the idea of chance belongs essentially to rationality. The concept presumes that no other form of connection apart from causality can exist; it is equivalent to the 'accidental'. This is a way of dismissing the wider significance of an event: accidents can happen to anyone. In the world of seduction, however, there are no accidents and there is no chance: everything is destiny.

I shall consider briefly some examples of seductive processes in Barker's plays in the following contexts:

1. Seduction of audience.

2. Seduction strategies of characters; i.e. seductions within the play.

3. Seduction of language itself.

4. The Abject. The negative mirror of seduction.

1. Seduction of the Audience. In some of his most recent work, Barker has 'set the tone' by addressing the audience directly in a prologue. The earliest example of this style of direct address is the dramatic monologue 'DON'T EXAGGERATE' where a dead soldier talks to the living; this is not an exegesis, nor a narration(though it contains elements of both) but a torrent of fluctuating and alternating emotional impulses which appear to interact with the audience's impassivity. This interaction - active performer/passive audience is, in fact, mirrored within the frame of Barker's drama where a highly vocal character confronts another character who remains silent (e.g. Stucley and Ann in Scene 1 of THE CASTLE - see below). In the prologues to THE LAST SUPPER and THE BITE OF THE NIGHT, the intention to seduce is obvious and, in the latter case, quite explicit:

I charm you

Like the Viennese professor in the desert

Of America

My smile is a crack of pain

Like the exiled pianist in the tart's embrace

My worn fingers reach for your place

Efficiently[22]

In his first stage play, CHEEK, Barker presents the audience with a working class youth whose main asset is a talent for seductive utterance and the title of the piece indicates this. In the prologues, Barker deploys a variety manoeuvres to 'engage' the listener.

I bring you an invitation

Oh, no, she says, not an invitation

Yes

We are all so afraid

Yes

An invitation to hang up the

Suffocating overcoat of communication

Hang it up[23]

Here, the prologue comically interjects objections to his speech on behalf of an apprehensive audience - the second and fourth lines(the second line, in particular, is reminiscent of the comedian, Frankie Howerd). The prologue persists, however, with mock severity ('Yes....Yes...'). The bold type in the

seventh line signals a forceful delivery which is softened by a more cajoling tone in the following line; this manoeuvre frequently occurs in DON'T EXAGGERATE and the prologue to THE BITE OF THE NIGHT: the speaker gets carried away into a display of excessive rage or becomes stentorian, whereupon, realising this is untoward, he attempts to mollify with a more wheedling tone. A process of persistently abolishing his own performance.

The next statement is immediately followed by an example of another ingratiating tactic:

> *And those with biros write upon your wrist*
> ***The play contains no information***
> *Aren't you tired of journalists?*
> *Oh, aren't you tired of journalists?*[24]

Sometimes Barker attempts to establish a conspiratorial relation with his audience but the repeated question here, the tone of which parodies the blatant, gossipy populism of its target, seeks to draw listener and speaker into a mutual empathy. This particular prologue ends with the speaker breaking off in mock horror:

> *When the poem became easy it also became poor*
> *When art became mechanized it became an addiction*
> *I lecture!*
> *Oh, I lecture you!(A terrible storm of laughter)*

Forgive!

Forgive![25]

The laughter here is, of course, the 'canned' laughter of much popular entertainment and its use is ironic. Through all the pantomime, however, Barker induced a complicity.

The essential seductive mode of these prologues is the challenge:

Should we not

I know it's impossible but you still try

Not reach down beyond the known for once[26]

As he indicates later in the same prologue, Barker views much contemporary drama as the theatrical equivalent of pre-cooked, pre-digested food; everything must be instantly meaningful:

Clarity

Meaning

Logic

And Consistency

None of it

None

I honour you too much

To paste you with what you already know...[27]

Barker's relation to his audience is seductive. As I indicated above the seductive relation is a mutual one - subject/Other rather than subject/object. The use of the word 'honour' here indicates the respect for radical alterity which this form of engagement implies. Seduction is the alternative to the manipulative, controlling relation which characterises communication in our society and it is with this in view that one must consider Barker's frequent denunciations of 'authoritarianism' both in the theatre and society at large.[28] This rejection does not merely concern the crude manipulations of the commercial stage but, perhaps more particularly, the Brechtian aim of presenting an analysis of 'the world' along the theoretical lines of - let us say - 'The Street Scene'.[29] For Barker such approaches invariably entail the degradation of language itself:

> *If language is restored to the actor he ruptures the imaginative blockade of the culture. If he speaks banality he piles up servitude.*[30]

The importance of speech is also highlighted by Levinas in somewhat similar terms:

> *Speech is a relationship between freedoms which neither limit nor negate, but affirm one another.*[31]

2. **Seduction within the Action of the Plays.** This is ubiquitous, continuous and often quite explicit, forming through various different permutations a central dramatic focus. As I have indicated in describing its processes, the action of seduction is usually indirect - we seduce the one in order to seduce the other; in this way, character A's seduction of character B can indirectly seduce the audience. This is, in fact, by far the most common situation in drama: it is the actor's aim. I have already referred to Barker's first stage play, CHEEK(1970), which focusses on an idle and cynical working class youth's attempts to fulfil his sexual ambitions through his rhetorical skills(hence the title). 'Cheek' - defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary as 'effrontery' or 'shameless audacity' - is calculated to challenge without alienating the other to the extent that they simply break off the encounter; the tactic of refusing shame is often deployed by Barker's characters. Laurie's schemes end badly because, like all effective seducers, he is seduced himself - to a considerable extent by his own articulacy.

In CLAW(1975), STRIPWELL(1975) and FAIR SLAUGHTER(1977), speech seductions or attempted speech seductions in particularly extreme circumstances comprise the crucial dramatic episodes of the plays. In CLAW, discussed in the previous section, the central character, Claw (Noel Biledew), a pimp, 'uses' sexual seduction as a form of class warfare. He is seduced in turn by the Home Secretary's wife, Angie, and, like Laurie, he finds himself 'dumped'. His threat to 'expose' the politician to the media precipitates his incarceration in a 'mental institution' where he is deliberately drowned in a bath. In the final scene of the play where the drowning takes place, Noel, prompted by the apparition of his

father, attempts to seduce his executioners. Though the speech Noel makes is impressive and probably transforms him, it is insufficient to deflect his assassins.In the climax of STRIPWELL, the eponymous hero, a high court judge, is confronted by an armed criminal who had sworn to kill him; Stripwell is allowed to try his eloquence with an *apologia pro sua vita* in a situation analogous to Claw's. For a moment it appears that he has succeeded. These attempts at an extreme reversal all have in common the aim of deflecting or diverting another from their established truth, - from their identity.

In FAIR SLAUGHTER, the central figure, Old Gocher, is incarcerated in a prison hospital; the action turns around his success in persuading one of warders, Leary, to help him to escape. In section one I discussed how the young Gocher had severed the hand of an executed Russian comrade, Tovarish; this grisly relic he had carried all his life as a symbol of his commitment to the cause of communism and his desire to be 'world historical' - Tovarish had been Trotsky's train driver. The hard-line Gocher subsequently sacrificed all of his personal life in the hopeless struggle for British Communism. Now, as he senses his end approaching, he is anxious to lay the hand to rest where it belongs - with Tovarish in Russia. When the audience first encounter him, he is still indefatigably propounding the faith to his gaoler, Leary. Pitying the old man, Leary gradually weakens.

Once a seduction is embarked upon what rules and moral obligations then operate on the participants? Leary, the gaoler, initially transgresses by offering to

turn a blind eye to Gocher's escape. This gesture in turn obligates Gocher to persist with the escape - a course of action he had given up, with a degree of relief. He escalates the challenge for Leary by asking him to come with him and help him return the hand. Leary does and the two become engaged in what is clearly a mad relation with the Brighton train becoming the Trans-Europe Express and the South Downs the Siberian Steppes. This would no doubt be pure farce were it not for the fact that Gocher is dying (in itself one of the most powerful seductions). Leary initiates the illusion to satisfy the old man but it becomes clear that Gocher is aware of this: in part he feels he owes it to Leary - who has just sacrificed everything - to persist. At the same time, he continues to exploit the situation and to challenge:

> *GOCHER: Don't give in to patriotism, Leary. It's their way of closing yer eyes... (LEARY looks at him. Long pause) You are sitting on the Trans-Europ Express, and I don't think you know why. You have done an action out of impulse, and it's frightened you. (Pause) Pity's not enough. You've got to find an ideology.*
>
> *(They look at one another. LEARY suddenly points out of the window.)*
>
> *LEARY: Look! It's the USSR!*
>
> *GOCHER: We never stopped in Poland! What happened to Poland?*
>
> *LEARY: No one wanted to get off.*

GOCHER: (grabbing the bottled hand) Tovarish! Your homeland!

LEARY: Congratulations, Tov!

GOCHER: His long exile, over!

LEARY: (breathing deeply) Soviet air!

GOCHER: Arise, ye starvlings from your slum-bers,
Arise, ye crim-i-nals of want!

(He breaks down into a fit of deep coughing. LEARY watches, helplessly. Pause. GOCHER recovers.) We'll have trouble finding him. (LEARY looks appalled.) A skeleton with one hand missing. Won't be easy. (Pause.) Will it? Not easy.[32]

The fundamental rule is not to break off the seductive duel which either party can do by invoking the reality principle: this would be a betrayal provided the momentum of challenge and counter-challenge does not slacken. Leary cunningly evades an ideological lecture, resisting Gocher's 'legacy', by announcing the USSR; Gocher temporarily nonplussed recovers to pick up the challenge and join in the triumph, using the momentum of this, to launch his next challenge - finding the corpse. Another typical feature of seduction very much in evidence here is bluff. Both participants know, and know that the other knows they know but they can't acknowledge this and know that the other can't acknowledge etc. Here Barker's stage directions are essential - the pauses, the looking at each

other at crucial moments. It often been said of Barker's writing that everything is articulated - there is no subtext. Arguably, this could be true of the passage just cited - in that nothing of substance is communicated. Alternatively, this is a very pregnant 'nothing', an intense and spiralling complicity.

Eventually, as the hand is about to be interred, a geriatric Staveley, Gocher's capitalist oppressor, wanders on. Leary insists on an impromptu trial and makes an impassioned speech for the prosecution. As with Claw, and Stripwell, this is the speech of his life and he indicts Staveley, the capitalist, as ultimately guilty of all that he has suffered as a gaoler. When he demands immediate execution, Gocher is shocked and remonstrates: as a result of the seduction, a reversal has occurred with the gaoler becoming the hardline ideologist and the dying man a 'sentimental' humanist. As Gocher dies in a beatific vision of Tovarish in glory, Leary goes off with the hand.

In his most recent plays, Barker has demonstrated an increasingly sophisticated and complex awareness of the processes and interactions of seduction. A common scenario is the 'magisterial' relation - 'teacher' and 'pupil'. In FAIR SLAUGHTER, Old Gocher's relation to the warder, Leary, is essentially 'educative'. In THAT GOOD BETWEEN US, the transformation of the degraded police informer, McPhee, is effected by Major Cadbury who functions largely as a guru. In CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES, the subversive, Toplis, supplants Pain as the soldiers' intellectual mentor. In THE BITE OF THE NIGHT, the pedagogic relation of Professor Savage and

his student, Hogbin, figures prominently. Perhaps the most spectacular deployment of this relation is in THE LAST SUPPER: based on the Christian archetype, it extends the ritual leavetaking from 'disciples' by a guru into ritual murder and anthropophagy. The prophet, Lvov, maintains a seductive relation with each of a very diverse group of 'apostles': he secures their permanent adherence by persuading them to kill him and eat his corpse. What Barker does show, before the denouement, is that each relationship is a vertiginous and unrelenting duel between master and pupil, so that Lvov's final gesture of invoking his own death seems the only escalatory response available to him which is extravagant enough to cope with them all: as Lvov knows full well, his grisly condition, that the Lvovites consume his corpse, is utterly binding according to the unspoken, unwritten 'law' of their seductive engagement. This is what Baudrillard is referring to when he talks of 'an unremitting obligation to respond and outdo'.[33] In doing this, Lvov seduces them beyond the transcendental law, beyond the prohibition, and this, of course, becomes 'the secret' which binds them and will be the source of their power. It is therefore appropriate that the act of cannibalism should not be seen by the audience and the fact that it is literally 'unspeakable' is emphasised in the final scene:

SUSANNAH: He had the flavour of -

*ALL: **Don't mention it!***

SUSANNAH: He had the texture of -

ALL: ***Don't dare describe it!*** *(Pause. The knot of disciples drifts, first one way, then another. The cloud passes overhead.)* '[4]

These are the final lines of the play. There is clearly a convergence here with Baudrillard's discussion of the secret reversibility at the heart of imperium:

> *Thus the pope, the grand inquisitor, and the great Jesuits or theologians all knew that God did not exist; this was their secret and their strength.*[35]

In the world of reason, motivation is founded always in positive causality and individual behaviour is structured upon biological drives modified according to various social and psychological determinants. In the world of seduction, purely negative forces are capable of intervening decisively like pools of accumulated anti-matter. The secret is a negative force. So is the meaningless. In THE BITE OF THE NIGHT, one of the principal characters, Gay, persistently attempts to impose an intellectual order upon her chaotic life; this order is forcibly maintained in the face of seduction and violence by an authoritarian exclusion of the other:

GAY: *You say yes as if I were supposed to feel bereft. You say yes with a hush, as if you knew something that I do not -*

CREUSA *I don't know either -*

GAY *I am tired of this idea there's something else. It's used to bully me, to hit me on the brow and brain and crush my life -*

CREUSA *I don't know either, I said -*

GAY *There's nothing else!*[36]

Seduction in its most common sexual meaning is frequently encountered in Barker's plays. THE BITE OF THE NIGHT is structured around the archetypal seducer, Helen of Troy. Barker's adaptation of WOMEN BEWARE WOMEN, focusses directly on the power of a sexual relationship to transform those involved; similar relationships are featured strongly in VICTORY (Bradshaw and Ball), CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES (Toplis and Erica), THE POWER OF THE DOG (Sorge and Ilona). In the latter case, which was considered in section one, it will be recalled that the mystery of the dead Hannela established the basic complicity of the seductive duel between Ilona and Sorge. Such transformations do not necessarily 'improve' the individuals concerned.

I have already referred to the functioning of the secret in THE LAST SUPPER. In NOT HIM, the final play of THE POSSIBILITIES, secrets are even more important. A woman greets her husband who returns after seven years of warfare brandishing a bag of severed heads. Both husband and wife have changed, however, and she is undecided whether the man who arrives is really her husband. Initially she

counters this uncertainty by making herself an enigma for the man - she wears a veil. The piece ends after she has made love and killed him. It is clear that the third character in the play - the wife's female companion - shares a secret complicity with her. When the friend states, after the killing, - 'You have killed your husband...', she is promptly hushed by the wife; as with the eating of Lvov, the event is unspeakable. The killing itself occurs offstage and is only communicated to the audience in an indirect and cryptic fashion:

> *SECOND WOMAN: And did he yell?*
>
> *WOMAN: He cried out with the awful cry of disbelief that all men make, and his eyes were searching for their focus.*[37]

In the first place, the woman's response is ambiguous: she could be referring to sexual climax here: it is only the Second Woman's following line that makes the audience re-interpret these words. Further, her use of the words 'all men' - suggests she has killed others. Earlier, under pressure from the 'husband',her female companion had attempted to deny that soldiers had passed through the village. When he objected that he had seen wheeltracks, the story was amended and he was informed that his 'wife' had hidden - 'Even from her allies'. The women have quite clearly had to deal with the prospect and possibly the actuality of the rape and murder that the 'husband' boasts of inflicting on the enemy. What happened then is their secret; we are aware of its presence and its power.

The salient feature of the piece is the sustaining throughout of the ambiguity concerning the man's identity - 'Him?' or 'Not him?' The 'wife' has two possibilties: the man is her husband with all the burden of moral and social implications that implies. Alternatively, he is merely 'another' raping and murdering soldier whom it is possible to enjoy sexually then kill without compunction. Her neighbour appears prepared to collude with whatever choice she makes and, in fact, actively assists in keeping options open. This is rendered possible because his long absence and the war have clearly changed the man so that he confronts his wife with a different identity. In the world of reason and logic, one of the fundamental axioms is that it is not possible for something to both be the case and not be the case; this is sometimes referred to as the law of non-contradiction. In NOT HIM, the man is both 'him' and 'not him'; objectively, the issue is never resolved and the piece is all about this paradox. The woman's desire thrives on the ambiguity, - as she states in the final lines:

> *WOMAN: Shh...(Pause. She sits.) He thrilled me. Oh, his words of violence, how he thrilled me! And his murders, how they flooded me with desire...*
>
> *SECOND WOMAN: It was him...*
>
> *WOMAN: It was him. Did he think I was fooled?*[38]

As in a number of these plays, the ending presents us with a final twist: having murdered, the woman discovers that she can not merely accept but positively

relish the idea that she has killed her husband. Her final sentence indicates the potential for reversal in the seductive duel. For the audience, there is a contradiction between the two sentences - 'It was him. Did he think I was fooled.' The man asserts consistently that he is the husband, so how is he attempting to 'fool'? Possibly by appearing as 'other', by assuming the swaggering and boastful identity of the miltary butcher in order to render himself sexually attractive. (His exaggerated claims and the heads business seem to be a performance calculated to impress.) The woman, however, appears to be ready to fool herself: in the absence of objective proof, she will believe what she wants to believe. Baudrillard's dictum applies to them both:

> *To seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion. It is to be taken in by one's own illusion and move in an enchanted world.* [39]

The line also suggests that she sees the man as concealing his identity and attempting to deceive her in order to escape his destiny - seduction is destiny. Such a perspective renders him ethically inferior and serves to justify her action. Now that the event has passed, she imposes its 'truth'.

In THE BITE OF THE NIGHT, the student Hogbin is about to be killed by the thuggish soldiers Epsom and Gummery; like Claw and Stripwell, he talks for his life - as it happens, - with some success. He suggests to them that their lives are unfulfilled:

EPSOM: *You 'ave the echoing tones of an advert for a mother's tonic -*

HOGBIN: ***Well, yes, because great truth shares language with great error,*** *and luscious sunsets are reflected in slum windows...(Pause. HOGBIN waits.)*

GUMMERY: *(At last). Yes...*[40]

For Gummery, this is no mere deflection from an immediate task; Hogbin has shattered the basis of his whole life. He undergoes a complete transformation, akin to religious conversion, and from what he says later it is clear that he has been seduced, not by rational argument, but essentially by the metaphor Hogbin in his extremity employs here. This brings us to language.

.

3. Seduction of Language. The ambiguity of this heading is apposite. Language is obviously the medium of Barker's drama but, though it is perceived as being deployed by the characters, it posseses a peculiar force of its own and often actively resists the attempts of individuals to control it. Language, as is suggested in the example cited above, seduces in its own right. In THE EUROPEANS, set in the aftermath of the siege of Vienna by the Turks in 1683, Katrin struggles to describe the experience of being raped to a priest charged with the duty of recording Turkish atrocities:

...then one of them threw up my skirt - excuse me -

(She drinks)

Or several of them, from now on I talk of them as plural, as many-headed, as many-legged and a mass of mouths and of course I had no drawers, to be precise -

I owned a pair but for special occasions. This was indeed special but on rising in the morning I was not aware of it, and I thought many things, but first I thought - no, I exaggerate, I claim to know the order of my thoughts WHAT A PREPOSTEROUS CLAIM - strike that out, no, among the cascade of impressions - that's better - that's accurate - cascade of impressions - came the idea at least I DID NOT HAVE TO KISS.

(Pause)

The lips being holy, the lips being sacred, the orifice from which I uttered my most perfect and religious thoughts only the grass would smear them but no.

(Pause)

Can you keep up? Sometimes I find a flow and then the words go - torrent - cascade - cascade again, I used that word just now I have discovered it, I shall use it, probably ad nauseam, cascading! But you -

(Pause)

And then they turned me over like a side of beef, the way the butcher flings the carcass, not without a certain familiarity, coarse-handling but with the very vaguest element of warmth, oh, no, the words are going, that isn't what I meant at all, precision is so - precision slips even as you reach for it, goes out of grasp and I was flung over and this MANY MOUTHED THING -

(She shudders as if taken by a fit, emitting an appalling cry and sending the water flying. The nun supports her. She recovers.)[41]

This speech exemplifies one of the most striking features of Barker's dramaturgy - namely his ability to forge text which reflects sensitively the fluctuations of a consciousness struggling to cope in extremity. Katrin's discourse strives for objectivity - for accuracy and truth - against the insidious seductions of language. It is arguable, however, that even her apparent successes are in fact seductions and the reason why the word 'cascade' recommends itself does not lie in its precision but in its ameliorative connotations and its capacity to anaesthetise - albeit only a little - one aspect of an unbearable trauma. Katrin comments later that she feels she is mad and, certainly, the structure of her discourse here is by no means 'rational' with its narrative impulse constantly baffled, deflected and seduced. In order to convey this, Barker ruptures the 'normal' patterns of syntactical relations; sentences begin forcefully, then break off without explanation; on other occasions they flow on, one into another,

without any punctuation but, above all, speech persistently doubles back to comment on itself. One is aware of different levels of consciousness - consciousness of the rape itself, of language and of the silent auditor who is transcribing all this; in particular, what kind of complicity exists between Katrin and the latter who, because he is invisible, in darkness, merges and is in turn complicit with the audience? Baudrillard characterises the process of seduction as a form of vertigo; this is certainly the language of vertigo.

4. Abjection. This same vertigo characterises the prologues discussed above - as well as much of Barker's published poems (e.g. DON'T EXAGGERATE). It is comparable particularly with the celebrated prose style of the French novelist, Louis Ferdinand Celine. In her analysis of Celine's style, Julie Kristeva isolates two typical features:

> *...segmentation of the sentence, characteristic of the first novels; and the more or less recuperable syntactical ellipses which appear in the late novels.*
>
> *The peculiar segmentation of the Celinian phrase, which is considered colloquial, is a cutting up of the syntactic unit by the projected or rejected displacement of one of its components.*[42]

Kristeva argues that the ejected element is desyntacticised but is typically charged with the speaker's emotion and moral judgement - an exclamation, an

interjection, exaggeration or abuse. Hence the logic of this 'message' dominates the logic of syntax. Kristeva goes on -

> *This 'binary shape' in Celine's first novels has been interpreted as an indication of his uncertainty about self-narration in front of the Other. Awareness of the Other's existence would be what determines the phenomena of recall and excessive clarity, which then produces segmentation. In this type of sentence, then, the speaking subject would occupy two places: that of his own identity (when he goes straight to the information, to the rheme) and that of objective expression, for the Other (when he goes back, recalls, clarifies).*[43]

This process is further developed in the later novels through the use of the famous three dots:

> *'Shut up and sell your gripes!'..hell, why not?...I'm willing but to whom?...The buyers are down on me, it seems...they don't like me, they only buy authors that are practically the same as they are, plus that snippet of coloured ribbon..head flunkey...head wipe-this-and-lick-that...skullduggery, holy water, lechery, bribery, guillotines...that way the reader feels at home, senses a kindred soul, a brother, indulgent, understanding, who'll stop at nothing...*[44]

Obviously, this technique allows the fluctuating emotion of utterance to dominate the demands for clarity and objectivity made by syntax. Kristeva also points out that this stylistic device allows for long syntactic periods in which

the sense of each phrase overflows into the totality; it is rhythmic, reflecting easily current levels of intensity; it refuses the normal subordinations and hierarchical structures of syntax; it allows the invasion of non-meaning and the dominance of intonation.

Kristeva sums up the style thus:

> *It is as if Celine's stylistic adventure were an aspect of the eternal return to a place which escapes naming and which can be named only if one plays on the whole register of language (syntax, but also message, intonation, etc.) This locus of emotion, of instinctual drive, of non-semanticised hatred, resistent to logico-syntactic naming , appears in Celine's work, as in other great literary texts, as a locus of the ab-ject. The abject, not yet object, is anterior to the distinction between subject and object in normative language. But the abject is also the non-objectality of the archaic mother, the locus of needs, of attraction and repulsion, from which an object of forbidden desire arises. And finally, the abject can be understood in the sense of the horrible and fascinating abomination which is connoted in all cultures by the feminine or, more indirectly, by every partial object which is related to the state of abjection (in the sense of the non-separation subject/object). It becomes what culture, the sacred must purge, separate and banish so that it may establish itself as such in the universal logic of catharsis.*[45]

I have quoted this passage in full because it seems to me that Kristeva is describing here - within the terms of a feminist-psychological discourse - a locus very similar to Baudrillard's seductive and Levinas's ethical relation - a relation beyond the subject/ object polarities where the identity of self and other is indefinite before the ego has erected its narcissistic structures of dominance and repression. Apart from the stylistic connection with Barker's writing, there are two other areas of convergence which come to mind here. Firstly, there is a typical gesture characteristic of Barker's characters which he himself has described thus:

> *..the character gives a performance that he then proceeds to subvert. So that they pre-empt other characters' right to judge them. The character says - 'I know myself, - my qualities. So don't think you can accuse me because I already know that.' That's the way a lot of political figues negotiate.*
>
> *You see the performance attempt and the failure. And the reason the performances are put up is because people need carapaces in order to endure what history has imposed upon them within the play. The girl in THE EUROPEANS who's been raped, plays complete absorption and a complete understanding of her situation. She continually plays self-knowledge but as the play progresses this is continually demolished.*[46]

This insistent movement towards completeness, self-possession is what Kristeva is alluding to in the quotation above from 'Psychoanalysis and the Polis' when

she asserts culture's need to purge itself - to resist the abject. For Derrida it manifests the desire of the subject for self-presence, for origin, for an end to differance. It is a gesture of exclusion and exclusivity aimed at 'The Other'

Secondly, there is the evidence of the scatological in Barker's work. Excretion, in particular, is 'partial object... related to the state of abjection'. Partial, in respect of Freud's anal phase, as representing a crucial arena of ego-mastery in the constitution of the 'subject' proper. As Derrida relates in his essay on Artaud, 'La Parole Soufflee':

> *Proper is the name of the subject close to himself - who is what he is - and abject the name of the object, the work that has deviated from me. I have a proper name when I am proper. The child does not appropriate his true name in Western society - initially in school - is not well named until he is proper, clean, toilet-trained.*[47]

One of Barker's most scatological works is THE HANG OF THE GAOL. Set in the ruins of a burnt out gaol, the action comprises the progress of an official enquiry into the cause of the fire. In our society, the convicted criminal represents the abject par excellence. Like the insane, the convict does not possess the requisite degree of 'self-control' to be permitted the normal 'freedoms'. Abjection is forced upon him/her - most notably, as Barker astutely indicates, in the routine of 'slopping out':

STAGG *No. You called them -*

JANE *Bucket-shitters.(Pause. He stares) I thought everybody called them that.*

STAGG *No.*

JANE *Well, they do shit in buckets, don't they?*[46]

For Jane, wife of the governor, Cooper, the prisoners' group identity is defined by this process - the essential element of which is that the individual is not permitted to dispose privately of his/her personal waste. In the opening scene of the play two prison officers contemplate the ruin:

UDY *The old screws never left a gaol without depositing a turd in it.*

WHIP *Burglar's trick.*

UDY *Superstition, obviously. One I adhere to. Sort of symbolic clearing out. Shedding of guilt. (He looks round quickly.) Anybody coming?*

WHIP *I don't think I will.*

UDY *(Removing his coat and jacket) Help you, Michael. Face the enquiry with an open mind....*[4]

Udy then proceeds to deposit his ritual turd on stage; Whip makes the attempt but without success. Superstition apart, by sharing the ritual with Whip, Udy is attempting to set the seal on a complicity which will bind them together in the face of the enquiry. The central focus, however, of the play and the nexus of the scatological thematic lies in the character of Jardine, the civil servant who conducts the official inquiry. This role is one of the most theatrically impressive and subtley-drawn of the entire corpus of seventies' drama. I will limit myself here, however, to the description of Jardine proffered by his colleague, Matheson:

MATHESON *....Mr Jardine wants you to take the piss out of it. Do you follow? Shit all over the job. And yet persist in doing it. It's a sort of grand machismo.*

JARDINE *Careful, Elizabeth.*

MATHESON *He is one of these people psychiatrists describe as partially complete. Only by abusing what he's doing can he extract the slightest satisfaction from it. Like a man who can't enter a woman unless he's poured vitriolic filth all over her. Called her a prostitute and so on.*

JARDINE *Elizabeth, you are being very stupid.*

MATHESON *He is a first-class civil servant but he will wallow in this self-contempt...*[50]

Matheson's comment is cut short by Jardine physically attacking her, - a response which would tend to confirm her analysis. In fact, Jardine's sole source of pride lies in his incorruptible and remorseless professional integrity. The denouement of the play comes when the Labour Home Secretary, Stagg, requires Jardine to falsify the enquiry's findings for'political considerations' - to help Labour win the coming election. Jardine, reluctant to forgo his knighthood, gives his assent at the Coopers' leaving party:

STAGG *:...George, where does a bloke go for a slash round here?*

JARDINE *Where ye're standing, I imagine. Down the leg.*

STAGG *Join me, will yer? Piss for socialism. Piddle Martyrs we shall be. (JARDINE goes to him, stands at his shoulder. They urinate.) Well, son? What's it to be?*

JANE *He is urinating on my Harry Wheatcrofts....*

JARDINE *I am laying down my honour. For your honour.*[51]

The combination of Jardine's moral collapse with this striking physical gesture is remarkably significant; it is an expression of contempt, a form of abuse directed at the Coopers and the social class the Coopers represent but it is also conscious self-degradation, a disburdening of guilt (as Udy suggested), a defiant flouting of the state of abjection - which is ultimately the badge of their subservience. It is the gesture that reduces Jardine to the same level as the Labour Home Secretary, as the prison officers,Udy and Whip, - as the 'bucket-shitters'. Because the carceral he has just 'got the hang of' is England. As Matheson remarks in her final line:

MATHESON England brings you down at last....[52]

There are numerous other examples of Barker's interest in the state of abjection; in THE BITE OF THE NIGHT, there is the public 'marriage bed-rite' of Savage and his wife Creusa; in THE EUROPEANS, there is Kattrin's insistent publicising of her rape which culminates in the public exhibition of her childbirth. The relationship between seduction and abjection is between positive and negative. Both comprise states in which the identity of the subject is thrown into question; the one normally pleasurable and voluntary, the other normally painful and involuntary.('Normally' because in both states the rule of total reversibility applies.) The one achieving its linguistic expression as 'desire', the other as 'abuse'.

CHAPTER SIX: Performance - Stanislavsky

In Chapter Four I argued a case against what might be termed the 'rationalistic' aesthetics of Realism and Brechtianism, suggesting that those who claim radical possibilities for these genres may be mistaken. As Adorno has asserted:

> *In art, direct protest is reactionary. Even critical art has to surrender itself to that which it opposes.*[1]

> *Artists who think that the content of their works is what they consciously put into them are naive and rationalistic in the worst sense of the word. Brecht is one of them. It may not be far-fetched therefore to predict the end of his present fame.*[2]

I have sought to indicate the case for an Art which 'brings chaos into order'(Barker) in circumstances where the 'order' is of a widely disseminated and widely accepted notion of 'the real world' based on authoritative social and 'scientific' discourses the underlying affective impulse of which (within the field of culture)is the desire for reassurance: this impulse is often referred to in terms of 'celebration' of 'commonly-held values' etc. In the previous chapter I outlined a theoretical approach which seems to me to focus Barker's central

processes and concerns appropriately. In this chapter, starting with a very brief summary of the production history of Barker's drama, I wish to consider some of the dominant contemporary acting and production theories from the point of view of seduction theory.

In spite of being widely recognised as 'a major voice', Barker's relationship with British theatre has not blossomed as one might have expected. In the seventies, Barker's career developed initially along similar lines to a number of other 'political' dramatists such as Brenton, Hare and Churchill. Having achieved a degree of success and recognition at The Royal Court (STRIPWELL AND FAIR SLAUGHTER), his work was taken up by The RSC Warehouse Company which staged THAT GOOD BETWEEN US(1977), THE HANG OF THE GAOL(1978), and THE LOUD BOY'S LIFE(1980). These plays were received as part of the Warehouse's programme of politically committed work. Howard Davies, the artistic director of the Warehouse, said of THAT GOOD BETWEEN US, the first Barker play to be staged at this venue:

> *I was keen to do a play by one of the writers who were linguistically orientated and belonged to the tradition of, if you like, intellectual socialists - Howard Brenton, David Edgar, Howard Barker.*[3]

This overt and consciously political slant tended to obscure for many critics other less immediately categorisable facets of the plays. So, Ronald Hayman could write of THE HANG OF THE GAOL:

> *What is ultimately stultifying for the audience is the inescapable feeling that each confrontation is being rigged to serve as an illustration for a thesis about class-war, that the dialogue is being written not to penetrate more searchingly into the theatrical reality which the fiction is generating, but to vent a spleen that existed in toto before Howard Barker began to concern himself with these characters or this situation. His interest in people and behaviour is secondary.* [4]

More analytical leftist critics were, however, aware that Barker's work was not essentially informed by conscious political commitment. W. Stephen Gilbert, in a review of FAIR SLAUGHTER, compared the play unfavourably with the Brechtian style of Bond:

> *The trick in Bond's plays is that the analysis percolates the theatricality, that the latter is a precise manifestation of the former. FAIR SLAUGHTER is not as clear and eloquent. It's a nicely judged pageant history of British Communism, but I'm not sure that Barker's unprecedented engagement with his characters doesn't finally fudge his conclusion -* [5]

At the same time, there was a growing complaint about the lack of authenticity and realism(see Hayman above) which led James Fenton to dismiss THE LOUD BOY'S LIFE in contemptuous terms:

> *The play.....knows nothing of Britain and nothing of politics. It doesn't want to know. It merely caters sycophantically to the prejudices of a pseudo-political milieu.*[6]

It is probably not unfair to say that Barker's work in the seventies was generally apprehended by directors on a 'political' level. It became increasingly evident, however, that his writing was growing in complexity with far fewer concessions to conventional expectations. The RSC's commitment to staging Barker(albeit this commitment had extended only as far as studio spaces) faltered when they rejected CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES after having commissioned the script. I would argue that the text of CRIMES was the most densely written Barker text to date. The drama was not really satire, nor clear political allegory - and it certainly wasn't realism.

The eighties evidenced a growing rejection of Barker's work by the major theatrical instutions. The National Theatre has never shown any interest. The RSC staged a 'season' of Barker plays in the Pit but the productions were notoriously 'threadbare' while the company channelled all its institutional energies and resources into launching 'Les Miserables'. THE BITE OF THE NIGHT was staged in similar circumstances. THE EUROPEANS, written for the RSC, was rejected by them. There have been productions of Barker plays at The Royal Court but these have frequently been promoted as collaborations by actor-led companies such as Joint Stock and,latterly, The Wrestling School. THE BITE OF THE NIGHT was originally submitted to the Court and eventually rejected by them. Outside London, Barker has had occasional commissions from more adventurous

regional theatres such as Sheffield Crucible(THE LOVE OF A GOOD MAN and A PASSION IN SIX DAYS).

As Robert Shaughnessy indicates in an essay which purports to analyse 'the Barker phenomenen'[7], Barker's main supporters within theatre have been actors, - a state of affairs which has culminated in the formation of a company devoted exclusively to performing Barker's work - The Wrestling School. This grew out of earlier Joint Stock productions(VICTORY 1983 and THE POWER OF THE DOG 1984) and it is interesting that this particular company, dedicated to democratic self-organisation, should have abandoned its characteristic process of company-evolved drama in favour of text-based approach. In the essay cited above Shaughnessy develops his argument by claiming that the actor Ian McDiarmid is 'a sort of spokesman for the author' and drawing upon McDiarmid's conceptions of the essential qualities of the plays. His conclusion is:

> *Actors, then, enjoy performing Barker's work because it presents them with the opportunity consciously and ostentatiously to display their skills as performers.*[8]

Shaughnessy, although he admits later that Barker's dialogue does contain 'a radical disruptive potential', continues this theme by suggesting that Barker's poetic 'style' is essentially an attempt to promote Barker in the role of the unique authorial figure, a project in which he is abetted by actors who wish to 'show off'. This somewhat threadbare formulation does not really address what is the key issue - which is surely the quality of the work itself? Shaughnessy's

essay considers all aspects of the so-called 'Barker phenomenon' from theatre companies to the covers of Calder playtexts - everything apart from the actual plays. I would offer an alternative explanation of the actors' enthusiasm - that the writing has imaginative depth and intellectual density which reveals itself through sustained engagement. Actors, who have initially to learn the lines and thereafter repeat them night after night on the stage, are in a unique position to be discerning about the quality of dramatic texts. They know the plays better than anyone else. A point which John Osborne made in his celebrated argument with Michael Billington over the merits of Shaw as a dramatist. One could dispute this by insisting that new dramatic works should be able to communicate themselves fully and immediately within a single performance - a belief widely held among the theatrical press.

The fact that it has been left to actors to champion Barker is no accident but reflects the inadequacy of the current theoretical orthodoxies relating to the production of plays. The key figure is this respect is the director who carries final responsibility for transferring text to stage and establishes the philosophical/theoretical approach of the company. The emergence of the director as a crucial figure has been well documented in modern theatre studies and this canon (Brecht, Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Artaud, Grotowski, Brook etc) has become a significant element in the education of the contemporary director. A concomitant movement has been the downgrading of dramatist and text. In the words of Jean Mounet-Sully - 'Chaque texte n'est qu'un pretexte', whereas Aristotle asserted that tragedy could exercise its power 'without performance or actors'(ανευ αγωνος και υποκριτων. Poetics 6). The extreme example of this is the

film auteur who instructs a writer to produce text for predetermined scenarios. In the theatre, a corresponding authority has, to an extent, been exercised by directors who have had a considerable role in shaping the final performance text of new plays. While it is the norm for theatrical practice to make demands upon text, there is little expectation that text should make demands upon practice - other than in the case of purely technical('special') effects.

What are the implications of seduction for performance? Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, it is a way of understanding human behaviour - of emotionally intuiting the irrational. It provides a counterbalance to prevent us from being blinded by reason. One does not have to be an intellectual to recognise and engage in seduction - its operations are familiar to all. When an actor steps onto the stage to present an action, he/she has in mind some sort of conception of what human beings are and how they behave. Much of this is intuitive and instinctive but their ideas will be shaped by the text and by the director. The performer's most basic instinct, however, is to seduce the audience, other performers, self. One could argue that this is the most essential quality of any work of art: to challenge, to fascinate, to divert the other from their proper identity. This is what throughout history has made theatre dangerous to all those dedicated to propriety, the proper, identity and of course truth. Acting has always been the least respectable of all the artistic professions because its seductions are potentially the most direct and threatening. All that effective acting has ever done has been to seduce - this is the only essential quality in a successful performance.

How does the performer achieve this? Usually instinctively and secretively - though instinct can be strategic and calculating. Directors, on the other hand, are generally explicit; discoursing to the actor they frame their wishes in terms of logic and their strategy is founded on control. Directors postulate various production values such as reality, authenticity, or clarity, none of which are per se seductive. It is impossible to write a coherent, logical and systematic discourse on seduction because these qualities(logic, coherence and system) are proper to reason. Seduction is by nature disjunct, illogical and paradoxical; it tends to be perceptible at the limits of reason - by playing upon those limits. In the first place, the actor should not become obsessed with truth. Authenticity effects are only one way of seducing: but no one is seduced by truth. What is seductive about the wonderfully authentic performance is the fact that it is **not** true: the more true it seems the more false it is. This is of course deeply ambiguous and, if anything, actors should perhaps fasten on ambiguity rather than truth. They should aspire to the mastery of appearances. Certainly one must persuade the audience to believe; but what is sought is not an objective judgement of verisimilitude; rather what must be engaged is the desire to believe. As Barker suggests, they must want[9] and they do want, but the actor has to connect with that want.

Baudrillard claims that seduction is only present in the form of a flickering:

> *Seduction does not consist of a simple appearance, nor a pure absence, but the eclipse of a presence. Its sole strategy is to be-there/not-there, and thereby produce a sort of flickering, a hypnotic*

mechanism that crystallises attention outside all concern with meaning. Absence here seduces presence.'[10]

In this respect, seduction violates one of most basic tenets of reason - the law of non-contradiction which states that something cannot simultaneously both be the case and not be the case. Perhaps this is the secret of actors' ability to fascinate: they are both present and not-present; they are themselves and not-themselves; the emotion is both felt and not felt etc. Actors tend instinctively to multiply the ambiguities of performance. If one accepts this illogical formulation, then the old Stanislavskian conundrum is disposed of: does the actor **become** the character? - can she say 'I am Desdemona'? The question implies an absolute and logical universe. The actor both **is** and **is not** the character.

When actors step onstage to perform, they challenge the audience to believe the illusion. They know that this challenge is crucial in that they must engage the audience to initiate the seductive pact; this is why they will instinctively look for a 'strong' entrance. Once the pact is initiated a certain momentum must be built and sustained. Conventionally, the audience are in no position to counterchallenge but what happens in effect is that they do so by proxy - i.e. by other performers with whom they have established various complicities. According to Baudrillard:

To seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion. It is to be taken in by one's own illusion and move in an enchanted

world. It is the power of the seductive woman who takes herself for her own desire, and delights in the self-deception in which others, in their turn, will be caught.''

Thus it is important that actors should initially seduce or be seduced themselves by their role. I distinguish role from character: what we understand by character may be involved in a role; rationalist thinking sees character - whether socially or genetically determined - as controlling role: therefore mastery of character is the key to playing the role. In seduction, however, where everything is reversible, role may put character into play to the extent of annihilating or exchanging it. It is therefore not essential that an actor be seduced by their character but they must be seduced by their role. There is also a way in which a performer can seduce by putting their own, personal identity into play - by transgressing or risking this. To seduce oneself one must discover the Other in oneself because only the Other can seduce us. Actors often say that Barker's roles are demanding in that they have to 'find' things in themselves. For instance, Katrin in THE EUROPEANS, who has suffered atrocity at the hands of the Turks(she has been raped and her breasts cut off), dreams not only of direct revenge on her attackers but of the same atrocity being visted on an innocent Turkish girl: she insists that revenge must be upon the innocent. An actress playing the role must be able not only to understand but to feel this - and feel it with all the savage intensity that Katrin does. This is one example of what for an actor, can constitute the seductive challenge of Barker's work.

Seduction is always mutual. There is no active subject/passive object distinction; this latter is a requirement of rational causality. Thence it follows that one cannot seduce unless one is oneself open to seduction. To be seduced is very seductive. Nor can one seduce by an effort of the will or by the strength of one's desire. These reflect the world of power and power is only seductive in so far as it is subvertible. On the contrary, weakness, failure, pain and death are in themselves immensely seductive. In particular, the performer should not be confused by the cult of 'desire':

> *What makes you exist is not the force of your desire (wholly a nineteenth century imaginary of energy and economy), but the play of the world and seduction; it is the passion of playing and being played, it is the passion of illusion and appearance, it is that which comes from elsewhere, from others, from their face, their language, their gestures - and that which bothers you, lures you, summons you into existence; it is the encounter, the surprise of what exists before you, outside of you, without you - the marvellous exteriority of the pure object, of the pure event, of what happens without your having anything to do with it.'*[12]

The action of seduction is always oblique - never direct and linear. Thus apparent indifference can constitute itself as a challenge for the other; the actor should never show the audience that he/she is trying to seduce them - this immediately invokes the reality principle. Thus to the extent that an audience sense that the performer is trying to make them feel pity, or anger or laughter, - by so much will the seduction be diminished.

The world of seduction is the world of appearances. This is why truth is not of the essence and bluff is a perfectly valid tactic. The obviously false, however, invokes reality by way of its antithesis. The distinction needs to be 'blurred' which is why ambiguity is important. Reality and truth are always interpretations of appearances - meaning. Actors are often suspicious of and positively resistant to meaning; this is because they know that no one was ever seduced by meaning. On the contrary, seduction occurs when meaning has been neutralised. Baudrillard:

> *The seducer knows how to let the signs hang. He knows that they are favourable only when left suspended, and will move of themselves towards their appointed destiny.*'[13]

The performer will tend therefore to empty their performance of meaning - while still, of course, 'holding' their audience. They will make use of chance, the secret and ritual - which derives its seductive power from the absence of meaning. Religion does itself a disservice by insisting on the meaning of its symbols and rituals: when one 'understands' a ritual it becomes banal. Baudrillard points out that great stars do not dazzle through talent or intelligence but through their absence.'[14]

The power of a seduction very often depends on the degree of transgression involved. The seductive relation suspends reality and the law. Not only this, but by transgressing the taboo, it turns the weight of the prohibition into a corresponding release of energy. For example, Shakespeare's Richard III,

establishes a seductive complicity with the audience and then vertiginously goes on to commit crime after crime. The energy of the play is derived from the audience's complicity in criminal and cruel acts: evil becomes a game. Above all, the performer and performance must function ontologically. The focus must be the present moment which must be fully lived, not presented as a unit in a story, or a history, or a parable. In this respect, the 'now' is always the end.

It is appropriate at this stage to consider those current orthodoxies of stage production which find themselves unable to assimilate Barker's drama. In the first chapter of this study I outlined a theoretical case against two such approaches - Realism(Naturalism) and Brechtianism. I will now examine these within the more particular area of production and the disciplines which obtain there. A conventional view sees Stanislavsky as the pre-eminent champion of stage realism and his 'system' which gave rise to 'the method' has been extremely influential in structuring acting and directorial approaches. The 'need' for a system of actor training arose more from Stanislavsky's frustrations as a director than from anything else. When he tried to impose detailed mise en scenes on actors, he discovered that their performances tended to become lifeless - unsurprisingly they lost spontaneity. The famous system was intended to provide performers with a discipline which would enable them to be spontaneous while at the same time responding to directorial requirements.

For Stanislavsky the ultimate aim of performance is 'authenticity' and the actor succeeds when he/she achieves 'truth.' I have already indicated the extent to

which the 'truth/reality/authenticity' nexus has been problematised by deconstuctivist philosophy. As it can be objected strictu sensu that all theatre must be 'false' to the extent that it is an imitation of life, Stanislavsky provided an ingenious mental volte whereby the actor could be truthful while being false. This was the 'magic if': 'if I 'really' were this character in this situation, how would I 'truly' behave?' In the final analysis, this 'truth' is always authenticated by Stanislavsky with a gesture towards performance: we recognise it unmistakeably when we see it. 'Truth' is the foundation stone of Stanislavsky's 'system' but the coherence of Stanislavsky's discourse turns upon the semantic ambiguities of the word.

> *..they (actors of genius) have grasped the* ***true*** *nature of the passions they are portraying; they do it because they have succeeded, by means of the action of their artistic intuition which is so indivisibly linked with their genius, in bringing out the* ***true*** *value of each word, which they never fling at the spectator unless it is simultaneously expressed in* ***true and correct*** *physical action.'*[15] (My emphases)

In the phrase 'true and correct', the epithets must presumably be taken, to a degree, as being tautologous. The 'correct' is the 'physical' counterpart of emotional 'truth'. Exterior correctness is possible without true emotion, however. Such would be mere *adaequatio*. It is clear, for instance, that this experience of truth, at its most profound and therefore most truthful level, is essentially emotional. Audience and performers alike are overwhelmed by this authenticity.

> *when the actor has made himself the band of visual images, when he himself is swept away by all his different 'I want to's so much that they have become his real life, when he says with all his inner and outer actions - 'I am' - then the first task of your creative work is to transmit your love of the man of your part to all those with whom you either sing or act in the performance, sweep them away by, or rather sweep them into, your own enthusiasm for the character you are representing.'*[16]

In fact, it was this emotional tendency of Stanislavsky to which Brecht most vehemently objected in arguing that the crucial communication with audience should be intellectual. The preceding quotation also serves to indicate the fundamental relationship on which Stanislavsky's system is built: the relationship between the actor and his/her character. Here, however, much of the Russian maestro's thinking is clearly seductive: the character is the 'other'(*your love of the man of your part*) to be wooed with all the lures of the system; the object is to achieve union (*'I am'*) and the actor approaches this state through submerging/merging his/her own 'character' in(to) the role. (It is perhaps this facet of the 'system', so strongly emphasised in 'method' acting, which leads to performances in which the salient impression received is of the dramatisation of intense self-absorption by the principal actors involved.)[17] I have already suggested that the process of seduction involves the pleasureable putting into play of one's own identity in a duel with the other - an abandonment of propriety which challenges, an opening which lures: all of these movements are to be found in the psychodrama of an actor 'building a character' where the 'other', assumed by the conscious subject, must seduce the subconscious. Seduce,

subconscious. Seduce, because the subconscious can only be acted upon indirectly by the will (Stanislavsky). The problem with this focus - actor/role - as far as a primarily interactive drama is concerned - is that it emphasises the drama of interiority rather than the drama of the interface between the characters. The approach works on the whole with Chekhov because his characters don't really interact and consequently don't change themselves or others.

The whole purpose of Stanislavsky's discourse is to produce a truth-based technique for attaining theatrical 'art'. As he must of necessity, Stanislavsky is compelled to deny the 'pure inspiration' approach to acting: inspiration must be reducible to at least a partial conscious control. And to read Stanislavsky in terms of seduction is to subvert the entire conscious ethos of these laboured and charmless texts with their injunctions to hard work, discipline, self-denial and respect for authority (Tortsov, Chekhov, 'genius'). It is also obvious, however, that Stanislavsky was a man wide open to irrational seduction. His passion, for instance, for 'The Seagull' reflects a very limited intellectual appreciation of the play: it is almost as if the strength of his passion for 'truth' leads him blindly into 'error'. There was the celebrated instance of Stanislavsky's performance of Trigorin whom he played as a conventionally 'caddish' vile seducer ('white trousers, white vest, white hat, slippers, and a handsome make-up'[16]). Chekhov produced consternation by remarking that Trigorin needed 'torn shoes and checked trousers.' Over a year later, anagnorisis and peripeteia strike Stanislavsky with an almost Oedipal force:

> *...I suddenly understood what Chekhov had meant.*

"Of course, the shoes must be torn and the trousers checked, and Trigorin must not be handsome. In this lies the salt of the part.."[19]

The cliche seducer is indicative of Stanislavsky's dismissive attitude to this process which, as in all power discourses(and an acting 'system' is a power discourse), must be marginalised or excluded.

Indeed the 'system' lays much stress on resisting seduction - particularly in respect of the element of concentration which asserts a willed imaginative 'truth' in the face the other/the audience. In AN ACTOR PREPARES, the teacher, Tortsov, illustrates this via his analogy of the monkey trainer choosing his pupils:

> *He took each monkey separately and tried to interest it in some object, a bright handkerchief, which he would wave before him, or some toy that might amuse him with its colour or sound. After the animal's attention was centred on this object the trainer would begin to distract him by presenting some other thing, a cigarette, perhaps, or a nut. If he succeeded in getting the monkey to switch from one thing to another he would reject him. If, on the other hand, he found that the animal could not be distracted from the first object of his interest and would make an effort to go after it when removed, the trainer would buy him. His choice was established by the monkey's evident capacity to* ***grasp and hold something.***[20](My emphasis)

Does one attribute the monkey's 'concentration' to a conscious act of exclusion, - or merely to the seductive power of the initial datum? Or is the monkey seduced more by objects within its 'grasp' rather than by an 'other'(the trainer) who stands outside its direct control? This relationship between monkey and object only functions within Stanislavsky's discourse if one is prepared to skate over it quickly; pause, and an abyss opens: the relationships suddenly multiply - the duality becomes a triangle(a.object, b.monkey, c.trainer) which duplicates itself (a.example/object[i.e.object, monkey, trainer], b.Kostya[monkey], c.Tortsov[trainer]), duplicating itself yet again in the text, reader, Stanislavsky triangle. Although the trainer's test may conform to an appearence of objectivity, aren't there lurking overtones of a 'moral' nature: the monkey should prefer the purely aesthetic object('bright handkerchief' or 'toy' with 'sound' and 'colour') to objects of mere sensual gratification('cigarette' and 'nut')? Since no analogy can ever be wholly acquitted of its connotations, what are the implications of comparing the training of actors to the training of monkeys? And could it not be argued that the unique appeal of monkey performance resides - not in the self-control necessary to perform 'tricks' - but rather in the seductive charm of the creature itself? A charm exhibited when the animal plays - hence the toys. In which case, the need for the 'trainer' may be questioned - aesthetically, if not commercially.

This lurking fear of redundancy and guilt about base imposture haunts the whole enterprise of Stanislavsky's discourse. In a writing which eschews charm in favour of the rigours of an authoritarian and 'scientific' method, there are, however, rare moments of poignancy: one such concerns our discussion here. It

occurs in the crucial and highly influential chapter of AN ACTOR PREPARES which concerns itself with 'emotion memory'. Stanislavsky describes how he was witness to an accident in which an old man had been killed by a street car: his point concerns the way in which emotions generated by the event become transmuted in the mind of the actor/artist and may later be used in performance.

> *- when I think of that old beggar lying in the street with the apothecary bending over him, I find that my memory turns to quite another happening. It was long ago - I came upon an Italian, leaning over a dead monkey on the sidewalk. He was weeping and trying to push a piece of orange rind into the animal's mouth. It would seem that this scene had affected my feelings more than the death of the beggar. It was buried more deeply in my memory. I think that if I had to stage the street accident I would search for emotional material for my part in my memory of the scene of the Italian with the dead monkey rather than in the tragedy itself.*
>
> *I wonder why that is?*[21]

The meditation ends abruptly in this single sentence paragraph; wonder may persist but thought terminates in striking fashion. The psychic material inherent in the juxtapositioning of these two monkey references is probably obvious but nevertheless the salient points will bear expatiation: the dead man is substituted by the dead monkey with overtones of guilt that the animal tragedy should have impressed more profoundly than the human ('It would seem that this scene etc...'). One can, however, in Freudian fashion, read this as an

alibi, a displacement of an unacknowledged accusation which finds in the scenario of the grief-stricken Italian(trainer) ministering hopelessly to the lifeless animal an analogue of Stanislavsky the actor-'trainer' administering his 'system' - to lifeless preformers(ergo the guilt). The feeding/death connection is circular - feeding leads to death and necessity for revival leads to feeding; the orange rind is poor fare. The 'system' is a recipe for artistic sterility. Stanislavsky acknowledges that this image is pregnant with 'emotional material' and that it is more profound than the street-car incident. Yet it is merely stated. There is no analysis, no 'crystallization', no 'filtering'. In sharp contrast, the street-car incident passes through a whole process from 'raw and naturalistic' impressions of 'ghastly physical details' to a serene allegory in which the white snow is 'life', 'the dark figure' 'death', 'the stream of blood' - 'the flow of man's transgressions' etc. When Kostya submits these impressions to Tortsov, he is praised:

> *'Time is a splendid filter for our remembered feelings - besides it is a great artist. It not only purifies, it also transmutes even painfully realistic memories into poetry.'*[22]

But when the student inquires about the 'exchange of persons and things', Tortsov dismisses this as being of no particular significance. Provided the emotion is regenerated,

> *Be thankful of that and do not expect the other.*[23]

Kostya, however, is uneasy and, significantly, the conversation leads directly on to yet another emergence of the 'inspiration'/'control' issue.

Under the heading of Concentration,this imaginative control begins at the base of the system, the actor in role, extending outward in a circle to include props, other performers and set but stopping at the 'fourth wall' of the proscenium arch. Stanislavsky has harsh words for actors and audiences who engage directly with each other in the course of performance. In those situations, where this is required by the text, his advice is blunt:

> *Take the old French farces. In them, the actors talk constantly to the public. They come right out in front and address either short individual remarks or long harangues which explain the course of the play. This is done with impressive self-confidence, assurance and aplomb. Indeed, if you are going to put yourself into direct relation to the public,**you had better dominate it.***[24](My emphasis)

The possibilities of a seductive relation are clearly ruled out.

The focus on relationship of actor to 'role', the grounding exercises in 'public solitude' with their assertions of imaginative control over (most essentially and paradigmatically) objects, the profoundly 'interior' mechanism of 'emotion memory - all of which characterise the Stanislavsky 'system' and, to an even greater extent, the 'Method' - serve to foreground the individual's relationship

to the self rather than the active processes of interpersonal relations. There is, however, one aspect of the 'system' which, one might assume, would address quite specifically the area of the interpersonal - 'communion'. Even here communion with another or others is merely one aspect - and a subsequent one at that. In AN ACTOR PREPARES, the teacher, Tortsov starts, naturally, with 'self-communion':

> *How can I address my very self? A man is a large creature. Should one speak to his brain, his heart, his imagination, his hands or feet? From what to what should that inner stream of communication flow?*
>
> *To determine that we must choose a subject and an object.*[25]

The communication model is the normal subject/object bi-polarity. In fact Stanislavsky/Tortsov goes on to stipulate two objects - the brain, identified with the subject, and the solar plexus which in Hindu thought is deemed the source of Prana (life-energy):

> *From the moment I made the discovery I was able to commune with myself on the stage, either audibly or in silence, and with perfect self-possession.*[26](My emphasis)

This image, faintly ridiculous in its complacency, complements Hegel's description of the perfect self-closure that reason enjoys in the business of 'explanation':

> *The reason why 'explaining' affords so much self-satisfaction is just because in it consciousness is, so to speak, communing directly with itself, enjoying only itself; although it seems to be busy with something else, it is in fact occupied only with itself.*[27]

Self - communion is also, of course, the form of Stanislavsky's text: the art of acting is expounded as an interaction between Tortsov, the teacher, and his most devoted, most talented student, Kostya: both are Stanislavsky - Kostya being the diminutive of his christian name, Konstantin. The phrase 'perfect self-possession' is significant in emphasising the constant control orientation of the 'system'; this apparent perfect self-closure, however, is a lure to seduce the audience: it is permeated with a consciousness of audience as other.

With regard to communication between characters, Stanislavsky persists with the subject/object format which is rendered in the crude and mechanistic sender/receiver model. This subordinates the exchange to the fixed identities of the two polarities. (The telephone/telegraph analogue is typical of and in part responsible for this conception because the bipolar receiving/sending medium processes but is utterly unaffected by its messages.) In seduction, the polarities dissolve in the exchange which becomes in itself the source of energy. Stanislavsky instinctively senses the dangers of interpersonal 'communion'. He warns against attempting to communicate in solitude with an imaginary 'other' because, reasonably enough, this may lead to a lack of authenticity when communicating onstage with 'living objects':

> *Let me repeat: I insist that you do not undertake any exercises in communication except with living objects and under expert supervision.'*

There is no explanation as to why communication exercises with 'living objects' require 'expert supervision'; this is in marked contrast to other areas of the 'system' where students are urged towards personal experiment and exploration.

After exercises in which the students are encouraged to communicate normally with each other, Tortsov introduces communion which is 'inner,invisible and spiritual'. This consists of 'rays', 'out-going currents' of feeling from the eyes which are transmitted to a 'living object' - once again conceptualised in terms of sender and receiver:

> *There are two types of exercises that we have just been doing:*
>
> *The first teaches you to stimulate a feeling which you transmit to another person. As you do this you note the accompanying physical sensations. Similarly you learn to recognise the sensation of absorbing feelings from others.*[20]

The process therefore is threefold - stimulation of feeling, transmission of feeling and reception of feeling. The problem with this kind of reductivist approach is that it imposes a limited and limiting conceptual framework upon

the rich variety and infinite possibilities of human behaviour, reducing emotional interaction to the formal model of information exchange.

The final expression of this mechanistic reduction is to be found in Stanislavsky's emphasis upon structuring drama in terms of causal chains expressed through units of objectives and superobjectives:

> *Life on stage, as well as off it, consists of an uninterrupted series of objectives and their attainment. They are signals set all along the way of an actor's creative aspirations; they show him the true direction.*[29]

These linear objectives are then vertically subsumed under superobjectives which in turn are subordinate to the 'ruling idea'. This hierarchical concept grew progressively more important for Stanislavsky and he regretted not having given it the prominence it merited within his pedagogic texts:

> *The general connection with it and the dependence on it of whatever happens in the performance is so great that the smallest detail, if it is not related to the ruling idea, becomes superfluous and harmful and is liable to divert the attention from the essential point of the play.*[30]

In his discussion of these terms (objectives, superobjectives, and ruling idea), Stanislavsky makes it clear that their 'discovery' entails their explicit

articulation. The whole ethos of this mechanistic causality shaped in accordance with totalitarian principles very much reflects the Stalinist atmosphere of the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Stanislavsky, the public figure, was perforce a man of his time. 7

The degree to which the political pressures of his time affected Stanislavsky's theoretical approach to performance has not been widely appreciated in the West. In part, this has been obfuscated through 'adaptations' of Stanislavsky by his main translator, Elizabeth Hapgood. Clearly, the increasing emphasis which Stanislavsky placed on 'physical actions' - as opposed to psychotechnique - conforms with the hardening orthodoxies of scientific materialism and the official rejection of all forms of 'subjective' thinking as bourgeois idealism. It also reflects a growing anxiety to control the performance of the actor. Mel Gordon describes the method thus:

> *Without relying on their memories, imaginative powers, or analytical abilities, actors were compelled by the director to decide which Physical Actions they would execute in the given circumstances of the play. Only that which could be physically performed and seen by an audience was allowed. Therefore, a character in love could not be acted merely through feeling; a Physical action had to express it.*[31]

In short, the credo here is that by going through the correct motions the appropriate emotions will be stimulated in the audience, - possibly via the

actor's emotional consciousness but not necessarily so: the emotional response of the audience can only be stimulated by the sensory data being presented to it. Gordon argues that this method

> *... equally distributed creative responsibilities for the production between the performers and the director. No more could the actor remain passive, waiting for cues and corrections from the omniscient director with his holy prompt book; nor was the director at the mercy of self-inspired performers.*[32]

While Gordon's final comment here certainly seems apposite, the positive implications of his earlier remarks are not self-evident. Though this method obviously requires the active participation of the actor, it is difficult to see how it leads to an equal sharing of creative responsiblities. This is evident if one considers the twenty-five step plan originally translated in an 'adapted' version by Elizabeth Hapgood as an appendix to 'Creating a Role' and latterly translated by Gordon in 'The Stanislavsky Technique: Russia'. Gordon remarks that Hapgood's version is 'somewhat confused in style'. A comparison of the two versions reveals that this is so because Hapgood has taken a director's scheme of work and attempted to mould it into an approach for the individual actor. (See Appendices 2 and 3.) What is fascinating about this plan is that the actors are not allowed to read the play until step fourteen - after characters, motivations, and all the actions have been fixed. Prior to this, plot, Given Circumstances and Superobjectives are fed to the actors by the director, a process which surely gives the director absolute control. Where director and actors together confront a script, even when the director has created a very

precise mise en scene, the actor can advance his or her own interpretation. Where there is no script there exists no basis for creative controversy - the actor has nothing to argue with. The wholesale exclusion of the actor from consideration of the wider significance of the piece is confirmed in the relegation of discussion of 'social, political, and artistic meanings' to the penultimate step - 24 - after the production has been 'fixed'. There is throughout this plan a strategy of manipulating actors into 'discovering' things which have been already deemed suitable for inclusion: the final point emphasises this:

> *25. Give the actors any external information - such as habitual gestures and mannerisms - that they have not discovered on their own for their characters.*[33]

Such a method of working would hold obvious attractions for a totalitarian regime involving as it does the concentration of absolute power over the production in the hands of a single individual; also, this power is total in the sense that the physical dimension, which is more traditionally an area of freedom for the actor not merely in the creative process but even in performance, becomes completely fixed. And because Stanislavsky's general method serves to clarify motivation, lay bare the logic and proclaim the Ruling Idea, all those ambiguities, ironies and subtleties so characteristic of written text which can be exploited subversively in performance, are bulldozed into conformity.

It is also interesting that the Method of Physical Actions emerged during the period of Stanislavsky's involvement with the Art Theatre production of Bulgakov's 'A Cabal of Hypocrites'. The play exposes the plight of an artist, Moliere, who has to operate within the confines of a totalitarian regime - an absolute monarch, Louis XIV, who rules largely according to personal whim but who occasionally deems it expedient to defer to a secretive order of ideological pharisees, the cabal of hypocrites. The King is personally served by a violent and thuggish duellist, the Marquis D'Orsini, who feels free to liquidate the hapless dramatist the moment he falls from royal favour. The parallels with the Stalin regime are quite unmistakeable: - Moliere is preserved in the fracas occasioned by 'Tartuffe' through the King's personal favour, just as Bulgakov owed the survival of 'The Days of The Turbins' in the face of strong critical/ideological opposition to Stalin himself. One of the most dramatically powerful moments occurs in Act IV when the disillusioned Moliere, to the absolute horror of his servant, Bouton, gives free rein to his disgust against 'the tyrant' and self-disgust at his own abject servility. It is difficult to see how Stanislavsky could possibly have failed to comprehend the explosive potential of the play (especially the chilling final scene when thuggish musketeers invade the theatre.) Stanislavsky allowed rehearsals to proceed with Gorchakov as director using the Method of Physical Actions, i.e. witholding the text. His strategy was to prevail upon Bulgakov to rewrite the drama along the thematic line of 'Moliere: the genius'. (The cult of genius being a politically and, for Stanislavsky, personally reassuring concept.) Bulgakov refused. Stanislavsky washed his hands of the production which was taken over by Nemirovich-Danchenko. In spite of box office success, the play was,

unsurprisingly, a critical failure and cut from the repertoire after a mere seven performances.

It also needs to be said that Stanislavsky was by no means a mechanical neanderthal. He has been criticised - even recently - for asserting the scientific authenticity of his 'system'[14] - in spite of the fact that his writings frequently and specifically disclaim this. Nor is there any indication of a slavish application of any particular psychological theories of the time. In the final analysis, he acknowledges the impossiblity of writing a prescription for artistic achievement and, unlike proponents of 'the Method', he is concerned not with reproducing 'reality' but aesthetically transforming it. His capacity to immerse himself imaginatively in the 'world' of a drama is clearly profound. Yet those 'worlds', as Stanislavsky so frequently and vividly describes them - beginning with objects and physical details - are, in their basic textures and the interrelationships of their parts, mere reflections of a received view of 'reality'. It is not Stanislavsky the devotee of inspired creativity, of 'mystery' and 'art' whose influence has pervaded twentieth century theatre, but Stanislavsky the systematist, the whole thrust of whose enterprise is articulated in terms of a rationalist mechanics, stimulus - response, cause and effect, subject and object, a cult of control exercised by the individual will which must in turn submit finally to a 'ruling idea'.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Stanislavsky's Heirs

Shortly before his death, Stanislavsky was reported by his deputy at the Opera House, Yury Bakhrushin, as having said:'Take care of Meyerhold; he is my sole heir in the theatre - here or anywhere else.' Perhaps a surprising comment, considering the well-known differences between their respective approaches to performance. Meyerhold's position being characterised by a strong rejection of the psychological realism which Stanislavsky consistently upheld. However, the latter's decisive movement in the direction of physically based rehearsal techniques and Meyerhold's awareness of the political currents running against 'formalism' may possibly have assisted their rapprochement.

Meyerhold had taken a stand against the style of the Moscow Art Theatre long before the artistic realignments consequent upon the Revolution. His criticism is interesting within the context of this study in that he draws attention to the essential banality which is the effect of Stanislavsky's 'psychologism' - presumably the actors framework of objectives:

> *A theatre which presents plays saturated in 'psychologism' with the motivation of every single event underlined, or which forces the spectator to rack his brains over the solution of all manner of*

social and philosophical problems - such a theatre destroys its own theatricality....The stage is a world of marvels and enchantment; it is breathless joy and strange magic.'

Meyerhold's complaint appears to focus on the reductive effect of 'psychologism'; by analysing the text, explaining it within the context of current notions of 'reality' and then staging it in such a way as to render that explanation wholly explicit, Stanislavsky was failing even his most celebrated author - Chekhov. The success which the Moscow Art Theatre attained with Chekhov plays owed nothing to Stanislavsky's realistic mise en scenes and everything to the interaction of the actors(of whom Stanislavsky, himself, was of course one):

The new aspect of the theatre was created by a definite group of actors who became known as 'Chekhov's actors'. The key to the performance of Chekhov's plays was held by this group which almost invariably acted in them, and which may be regarded as having created Chekhov's rhythm on the stage. Every time I recall the active part which the actors of the Art Theatre played in creating the characters and the mood of 'The Seagull' I understand why I believe firmly in the actor as the principal element in the theatre. The atmosphere was created, not by the mise en scene, not by the crickets, not by the thunder of horses' hooves on the bridge, but by the sheer musicality of the actors who grasped the rhythm of Chekhov's poetry and succeeded in casting a sheen of moonlight over their creations.

> *In the first two productions, 'The Seagull' and 'Uncle Vanya', when the actors were still free, the harmony remained undisturbed. Subsequently, the naturalistic director first based his productions on 'the ensemble' and then lost the secret of performing Chekhov.*
>
> *Once everything became subordinated to 'the ensemble', the creativity of every actor was stilled. The naturalistic director assumed the role of a conductor with full control over the fate of the new tone which the company had discovered; but instead of extending it, instead of penetrating to the heart of the music, he sought to create atmosphere by concentrating on external elements such as darkness, sound effects, properties and characters.*[2]

I have quoted Meyerhold at length on this subject because his comments reveal a number of interesting points. He perceives Stanislavsky as being in the grip of the Meiningen approach to production the outstanding features of which seemed, by common consensus, to have comprised spectacularly orchestrated crowds, historical 'authenticity' of costume and decor coupled with elaborate technical effects in sound and lighting. Stanislavsky particularly admired the highly disciplined approach of the company's director, Ludwig Chronegk, who was himself an efficient conduit for the minutely detailed written stage directions of the Duke. 'Ensemble' playing meant the submission to autocratic direction of all players - i.e. including the leads. Not surprisingly the most frequent criticism of the Meiningen troupe concerned the quality of the acting which was rarely considered to be anything more than adequate; nor did their celebrity throughout Europe succeed in attracting any 'stars' of note. In contrast, the acting in the

original M.A.T. production of 'The Seagull', with the possible exception of the actress playing Nina and Stanislavsky himself as Trigorin, was generally considered superlative. Meyerhold attributes this vaguely to a feeling for the play's 'musicality', the 'rhythm' of the 'poetry', the 'sheer fascination' of Chekhov's personality. In spite of the mise en scene, Meyerhold who played Konstantin describes the actor as 'still free'. It would appear that the success of the production was due in large measure to the creative interplay of the performers and their personal relationship with Chekhov. A seductive relation rather than one of control. When Stanislavsky insisted on asserting total directorial control that creative interplay vanished.

Meyerhold, however, focuses his objections to Stanislavsky on his 'psychologism' and 'naturalism'. As a director he too demonstrated the same penchant for absolute control of which he accused Stanislavsky. In pursuing his ideas about 'musicality' and 'rhythm' in his 'stylised' theatre, he was quite capable of crushing the actor's personal creativity beneath a welter of directorial detail; as in the case of his production for the Theatre-Studio of Maeterlinck's 'The Death of Tintagiles'(1905):

> *In order to achieve these effects, Meyerhold left as little as possible to chance, prescribing every possible detail, visual and oral, in his prompt copy, often sketching in desired gestures and poses. In this respect, his method was strikingly similar to Stanislavsky's in his early productions of Chekhov, and reflects the same wish for absolute control over the actors.*[3]

Stanislavsky commented on the production:

> *Once again I became convinced that a great distance separates the dreams of a stage director from their fulfilment, that above all else the theatre is for the actor and cannot exist without him, that the new drama needs new actors with a completely new technique.*[4]

In fact, both directors faced the same problem of engaging the actor's creativity with their directorial creativity. Both saw the solution as lying with the training of the actor and both devised different 'exercises' in order to effect this. Stanislavsky, however, always maintained the integrity of the notion of character: the actor's function was to embody the character as fully as possible. For Meyerhold the primacy of character was part and parcel of 'psychologism' and 'naturalism'. His own theatrical intentions were altogether much more apocalyptic than any formal conception of the drama as comprising the interaction of characters. Implicit in Szondi's formulation of the interpersonal drama is an acceptance that life is contradictory and values are relative: such a proposition is wholly unacceptable to the messianic, revolutionary consciousness which dreams always of regaining a lost unity to be 'celebrated' in the form of 'rituals' or 'festivals'. This view of theatre is a consistent thread in the pre-revolutionary and the post-revolutionary Meyerhold; in 1907, we find it expressed thus:

> *Having originated in the dithyrambic homage paid to Dionysus, drama gradually receded from its religious origins. The mask of the tragic*

hero, the recognisable embodiment of the spectator's own fate, the mask of a single tragic fate which embodied the universal 'I', became slowly objectivised over the course of centuries. Shakespeare explored characterisation, Corneille and Racine made their heroes dependent on the morality of a particular age, thereby transforming them into materialistic formulae. The stage has become estranged from its communal-religious origins; it has alienated the spectator by its objectivity. The stage is no longer infectious, it no longer has the power of transfiguration.[5]

In the demystified, scientific materialist but no less messianic world of Bolshevism, the actor, according to Meyerhold, was simply a performer highly trained in using his or her body for expressive purposes; hence his famous 'biomechanics'. The stimulation of appropriate emotional responses in actor and audience was to be achieved through the physical movement of the former:

All psychological states are determined by specific physiological processes. By correctly resolving the nature of his state physically, the actor reaches the point where he experiences the excitation which communicates itself to the spectator and induces him to share in the actor's performance: what we used to call 'gripping' the spectator. It is this excitation which is the very essence of the actor's art. From a sequence of physical positions and situations there arise 'points of excitation' which are informed with some particular emotion.

Throughout this process of 'rousing the emotions' the actor observes a rigid framework of physical prerequisites.[6]

The implications of this crude behaviourism and Meyerhold's claim that 'art should be based on scientific principles'[7], involve very simplistic assumptions about the possibilities of directly manipulating collective audience responses. He rejected what he referred to as the 'inspirational' method and the method of 'authentic emotions':

(essentially they are one and the same, differing only in their means of realisation: the first emplys narcotic stimulation, the second - hypnosis), the actor has always been so overwhelmed by his emotions that he has been unable to answer either for his movements or his voice. He has no control over himself and hence been in no state to ensure success or failure.....

On the other hand, a theatre which relies on physical elements is at very least assured of clarity.[8]

This, with its emphasis on 'control' and 'clarity', is a far cry from the pre-Revolutionary 'marvels and enchantment', 'breathless joy and strange magic'. At times, Meyerhold's 'revolutionised actor' is remarkably close to Brecht's actor/demonstrator:

The actor-tribune needs to convey to the spectator his attitude to the lines he is speaking and the situations he is enacting; he wants

to force the spectator to respond in a particular way to the action which is unfolding before him....(My emphasis)

When the actor-tribune lifts the mask of the character to reveal his true nature to the spectator he does not merely speak the lines furnished by the dramatist, he uncovers the roots from which the lines have sprung.(1925)[9]

Unlike Brecht, however, Meyerhold has no desire to foster an emotionally detached and objective state of mind in his audience.

The American offshoot of Stanislavsky's System, the 'Method', is essentially similar to its prototype. Here, there is an even greater insistence on the actor 'living' his role, upon psychoanalytic introversion, upon the actor 'working on himself'. In Strasberg's book, the break with the text which is always implicit in Stanislavsky becomes complete:

We then add words to the various actions that the actor has thus far created. If we come to the words too soon, which is the tendency of most training, the danger is that the reading of the line will become the major incentive of the actor....'[10]

Whereas when the actor does believe in what he is doing, even if one word goes out, a line, a phrase, it's not that bad. The actor can say, 'I'm doing so many other things that are important, that fulfill me,

that make me feel real, make me feel I have a right to say what I am saying, I have a right to do what I am doing..''[1]

The 'thrust' of Strasberg's training lies in penetrating the individual actor, stripping away 'mannerisms' which inhibit 'true' emotional expression and accessing profound affective memories which subsequently may be exploited in performance.

Recreating or reliving an intense emotional experience at will was at the core of our work.'[2]

In his book, A DREAM OF PASSION, Strasberg has nothing whatsoever to say about 'communion' other than a passing reference to Stanislavsky's 'rays' which he describes as 'unfortunate'. Apart from the processes of emotion memory, he focusses firmly on the solipsistic control gymnastics of 'concentration' and emotional recall. In order properly to 'live through' the fictional experience of the play, actors must strengthen their imaginative capacity through a series of exercises:

The sequence proceeds from the simple to the more complex; from objects that are in our immediate environment to objects that reside only in our memory; from objects that are external and clearly observable to objects that are internal and depend on our inner concentration to be recreated. We move from single objects of attention to combinations of a number of objects.'[3]

The first of these exercises requires the student to study closely the way they drink a cup or glass of liquid for breakfast; they then imagine, as vividly and accurately as possible, performing the action without the object. The next exercise involves applying the same procedure to shaving for men and combing the hair/applying makeup for women. According to Strasberg, this use of the mirror is important in revealing the way actors see themselves. Eventually an imaginary 'personal object' is introduced - by which one presumes that Strasberg means another person. The categorisation of the other as 'object' suggests a continuity extending from cups, razors and combs etc through to people and chooses to ignore a very radical distinction. The items Strasberg refers to as objects, typical though they may be, are in fact objects of a particular kind: Heidegger refers to them as 'equipment' and defines their essence as a 'standing-in-reserve' - their sole function is to be used; they exist to be controlled. The same attitude may be extended to other people but it presents an extremely limited and limiting consideration of the possibilities of human interaction. In a drama where the central focus is human interaction, then surely a consideration of relating to other people should precede relationships with mere objects? Furthermore, in common with Stanislavsky, Strasberg goes on to stress the importance of the actor's being able to achieve 'public solitude'. He advocates exercises which require the actor to perform publicly personal behaviour which they only undertake in privacy:

> *I do not stop with the private moment. Rather, the private moment becomes a starting point for the other exercises that the actor has already practiced. The actor creates the private moment and maintains*

it as he adds other elements unrelated to it.... The exercise itself usually lasts about an hour....'[14]

While not denying the validity of this kind of exercise - especially as regards acting in films and 'fourth-wall realistic' stage-plays - it nevertheless does encourage a particular type of performer and performance. The 'public solitude' exercise works by the actor attempting to exclude their awareness of the presence of an audience through concentrating intensely on their own/character's private preoccupations. This strengthens the tendency of the method to postulate acting as the dramatisation of intense self-absorption; quite the opposite of seduction which is always relational and outwardly directed. Further evidence of Strasberg's repression of the relational is to be found in the account he gives of his celebrated emotional-memory exercise:

In the emotional-memory exercise, the actor is asked to recreate an experience from the past that affected him strongly.....

What he must do is describe the sensations as he tries by sense-memory to recapture them, just as though he were doing an exercise in concentration....'[15]

The actor starts recalling five minutes before 'the high point of the scene' and the exercise proceeds with Strasberg assisting recall as necessary by asking questions relating to the physical environment. The tension builds until 'the emotion breaks through', - at which point he terminates the exercise. Strasberg

regards the emotion generated as a product solely of the mechanism of recall in the individual actor. In doing this, he refuses to consider the interactional element, especially his own powerful presence as prompter and authority figure with quite definite expectations of what could constitute a successful outcome. Emotion is treated as something which has its fount in the interiority of the individual, not as something generated on the interface between individuals. The actor, who is required to consider in great detail the effect on his/her sensory motor mechanism of physical objects, is not required to analyse in the same detail the quite different and altogether more profound effect of the presence of another person - let alone a complex interaction with that person. Strasberg is not interested in and does not require the student to narrate/analyse the whole of the interaction itself:

> *Some acting teachers misuse this exercise. They want to know the stories. I don't want to know. The less the actor tells me, the better. I only talk to the student if I feel he's having some difficulty or if I want to check where his concentration is.*[16]

The approach to emotional interaction is via the recalling subject, stimulated indirectly through happenstance associated detail excluding the other as well as any precise analysis of the interaction. For instance, is the actor's emotion a response to the other's emotion? How is the other's response modified by the subject's emotion? Is the subject aware of this modification and if he/she is, how do they respond in turn? None of this is of any interest; it is sufficient merely to generate a convincing display of emotion. Strasberg, unlike

Stanislavsky, insists that what is recalled is the original emotion which can be recreated at will:

> *In recreating the details of the original emotional memory, the actress recreated the original emotion.*[17]

Stanislavsky, it will be recalled, considered the 'original' emotion as raw material which stimulated but was transformed by the creative imagination. He also accepted that such stimuli could lose their potency - a point denied by Strasberg. In this respect, it could be argued that by shielding the memory from analysis, Strasberg allows it to retain its disturbing potency by remaining repressed.

Another of Stanislavsky's 'heirs' who has developed and adapted the System is Michael Chekhov. Like Strasberg, he places even less emphasis on the interactive than Stanislavsky did. Instead of emotional memory, Chekhov lays much more stress on the actor's imagination. Again, the primary focus is on the performer's relationship to the role. Chekhov insists that the actor must first formulate a mental image of the character - initially perhaps merely a gesture or pose which is somehow typical or expressive of the character's individuality. The actor then proceeds to 'incorporate' this - i.e. he/she physically transforms him/herself into the image. Chekhov believes that the actor should imagine characters who have an independent life; one's creativity then consists of interacting with these mental creations - questioning them, putting them in

hypothetical situations, sensing their 'atmospheres' etc. In fact, he recommends that the actor should fall in love with the character's 'atmospheres':

> *Stanislavsky used to say that it is a good thing if an actor can 'fall in love' with his character before starting actual work upon it. To my understanding, in many cases he meant falling in love rather with the atmospheres which envelop the character.'*[18]

Clearly a seductive relationship is required with a product of one's own subconscious: one does not exercise complete control over the process: this would be to reduce the images to the sterility of conscious fabrications; his mental creations, however, require a sufficient degree of 'otherness' to render them potentially seductive. Again this emphasis on the actor's interiority could easily serve to create a tendency to self absorption. This is not to say that audiences will find such self-seductions unseductive in their turn - merely that the interactions **between** characters do not receive an equal focus of attention. In his 'Workbook for Actors', THE STANISLAVSKY TECHNIQUE: RUSSIA (Applause.1987), Mel Gordon argues:

> *Chekhov shared with Stanislavsky a belief in developing the actor's sources of inspiration, feeling and expressiveness, but he taught that the stimulus should always begin outside the private and internalized world of the performer.'*[19]

Gordon is clearly thinking here of the substitution by Chekhov of imagination in place of memory. He cites examples of Chekhov's exercises for awakening the

feeling of sadness - imagining the grieving sounds of a rural family mourning the accidental death of a boy and a girl, imagining walking through the atmosphere of a flood-devastated village; for Dartington students, with whom these exercises were devised, such scenarios would, in almost all cases, have a definite quality of 'otherness' - they would be alien to students' direct personal experience and this very quality would be the stimulus to creative engagement.

Another of Chekhov's inventions was the notion of the 'centre'. All individuals according to Chekhov possess a 'centre' around which the rest of their identity is structured. The actor is encouraged to situate his/her 'centre' in the middle of the chest:

> *Imagine that within your chest there is a center from which flows the actual impulses for all your movements. Think of this imaginary center as a source of inner activity and power within your body.*[20]

When considering a role, however, the actor may decide that a character's 'centre' is located in a different part of their anatomy; to take very simple examples a glutton's 'centre' would probably locate in the stomach, a miser's in the fingers. Although Chekhov did indicate that a character's 'centre' could exist outside their body, he never suggests that it might do so in relation to another character. The effect of the 'centre' is the firm grounding of the character's identity but in seduction that identity is put into play. Chekhov's theoretical approach is typical of the Stanislavskian bias towards character-

centred theatre as opposed to interactional- centred drama. Related to the concept of the 'centre' is that of the 'psychological gesture.'

Chekhov argues that each character possesses a basic desire which can be expressed in a physical movement. In accordance with the generally accepted notion of a close physical/psychological interdependence (as with Stanislavsky's Method of Physical Actions), the actor, having discovered this movement, will possess the ideal instrument for producing in him/herself the correct state of mind:

> *So we may say that the **strength** of the movement stirs our will power in general; the **kind** of movement awakens in us a definite corresponding **desire**, and the **quality** of the same movement conjures up our **feelings**.*[21]

According to Chekhov, the image of this gesture should become ever-present in the back of the actor's mind while they perform their role. He adds, however,:

> *I don't think it is even necessary to mention that the PG itself must never be shown to the audience, no more than an architect would be expected to show the public the scaffolding of his building instead of the completed masterwork. A PG is the scaffolding of your part and it must remain your technical 'secret'.*[22]

This quite decisive prohibition, which Chekhov puts in parenthesis in his text, is a crucial quality of the Psychological Gesture. Contrary to what Chekhov says here, it is by no means self-evident that the gesture should never be shown to an audience; if the gesture is so powerfully and totally expressive, it could be used at critical moments when the character is, so to speak, 'unmasked', exposed in their 'being for self' as opposed to their varied 'being for others'. Chekhov is aware of these differing self-presentations and advises that the PG should be subtley adapted to provide the key to these interactions:

> *While using the PG as a means of approaching your part, apply it also to ascertain the different attitudes your character has toward the others. Thinking that a character always remains the same while meeting other characters in the play is a crucial mistake that even great and experienced actors often make.*[23]

That the PG should remain 'secret' is, I would suggest, significant to the way it functions. It can endow the performer with the mysterious allure which the secret tends to arouse. Not only are the audience aware of the presence of something they cannot apprehend but they may further intuit that this secret is deliberately witheld from them (thereby rendering the character all the more interesting). If, as Chekhov claims, any psychological nuance whatsoever is capable of being conveyed to an audience, then this kind of interaction is certainly possible.

Unlike Strasberg who dismisses the Stanislavskian notion of Radiation, Chekhov lays a certain stress upon it. In the first chapter of TO THE ACTOR, Chekhov sets out his basic qualities which the actor should seek to attain - Ease, Form, Beauty, and Entirety; it is notable that all the exercises expounded in this section involve the actor working on him/herself without any contact with others. Exercise 6, however, requires the actor to move around and -

> *'in advance send the rays from your body into the space around you, in the direction of the movement you make, and after the movement is made.*[24]

Chekhov asserts that this is not merely a subjective impression on the part of the performer but that it leads to the transmission of actual rays. However, the initial exercise does not involve communication with another but the principal purpose of the exercise seems to be the reinforcement of the performer's sense of self:

> *A sensation of the actual existence and significance of your inner being will be the result of this exercise. Not infrequently actors are unaware of or overlook this treasure within themselves, and while acting rely far more than necessary upon merely their outer means of expression.....In fact, there is nothing within the sphere of our psychology which cannot thus be radiated.*[25]

Later in the chapter, Chekhov feels the need to make 'a few supplementary remarks' on radiation. He argues that to radiate means to give or send (rays)

and that the counterpart of this is to 'receive'. The actor must 'receive' all of the impressions which should impinge upon him, including the presence, actions and words of partners. The process of 'receiving' is described thus:

> *As to how the receiving should be executed and felt, the actor must bear in mind that it is more than merely a matter of looking and listening on the stage. To actually receive means to draw toward oneself with the utmost inner power the things persons or events of the situation. Even though your partners may not know this technique, you must never, for the sake of your own performance, stop receiving from them whenever you choose to do so. You will find that your own efforts will intuitively awaken other players and inspire their collaboration.*[26]

In the first place it is noteworthy that whole business of 'receiving' is consigned to the status of a 'supplement'. Secondly, Chekhov turns what might normally be seen as a passive activity into an energetically positive one, an activity forcefully **willed**,(in the sense which Grotowski specifically proscribes;[27])in fact he even implies that it is necessary to 'receive' from partners who are not radiating 'whenever you choose to do so'. The way Chekhov expresses himself here suggests a bludgeoning of other actors, subjecting them to the emotional requirements of his own performance rather than a sensitive attunement to their wavelength. These four paragraphs of supplementary remarks, less than a single page, comprise all that Chekhov has to say on the subject of interaction. It is clear, however, that he accepts broadly the mechanistic Stanislavskian conception of communication - the sender-receiver model. He also

endorses the mechanistic Stanislavskian system of objectives and superobjectives - describing them as 'perhaps his most brilliant inventions.'[28]

And indeed, this focus of acting technique upon the individual interiority, radically alienated from the world and others is wholly appropriate to what is perhaps the principal thematic of twentieth century literature: this has sought 'truth' in an intense introspection, a ballooning and precious individual subjectivity which has come to despair of achieving 'self-expression' - the existentialist dilemma. Szondi's survey of modern drama analyses how different dramatists whose medium is essentially public, objective and interactive have attempted to solve the contradiction of expressing the private, the subjective and the incommunicable:

> *In Chekhov's plays, the characters live under the sign of renunciation - renunciation of the present and of communication before all else, renunciation of the happiness arising from real interaction. This resignation, in which passionate longing and irony mix to prevent any extreme, also determines the form of Chekhov's plays and his position in the development of modern theater.*[29]

In the case of Ibsen, Szondi compares his typical formal technique to that of Sophocles' 'Oedipus Tyrannos' where the action, the actual tragic events have all already occurred before the play commences; the action of the play comprises Oedipus' discovery of the 'truth' about himself. The significant difference is, however:

> *Truth in OEDIPUS REX is objective in nature. It belongs to the world. Only Oedipus lives in ignorance, and his road to the truth forms the tragic action. For Ibsen, on the other hand, truth is that of interiority. There lie the motives for the decisions that emerge in the light of day; there the traumatic effects of these decisions lie hidden and live on despite all external changes. In addition to the temporal present, Ibsen's thematic does without presence in this topical sense as well - a presence which the drama requires. The thematic does arise out of interpersonal relationships, but it is at home only in the innermost being of these estranged and solitary figures, **as a reflex of the interpersonal.***[30](My emphasis)

Because of this, Szondi argues, Ibsen needs to make use of an analytical technique in order to link this past to the dramatic present and direct presentation of the interpersonal is avoided by this element being filtered through intense subjectivity. A vast quantity of dramatic writing has been dedicated to the impossibility of communication or 'communion' with others and to the ultimate emptiness of the isolated subject - Beckett and Pinter for example. Existentialism, attempts to re-assert the neo-classical values of humanism and freedom by -

> *..cutting through the controlling power that milieu exercised over the individual. It radicalizes the alienation. Milieu becomes situation, and, from that moment on, the individual, no longer bound to milieu, becomes free - but within a situation that is simultaneously his own and alien to him.*[31]

The alienation consequent upon this existentialist gesture - the rejection of milieu - tends to throw the baby out along with the bathwater. What one is alienated from is always a view of the world(i.e. of other people) - a view which represents a closure and is depressing because of its limitations - 'this is all there is!' In Sartre's HUIS CLOS, the central character, Garcin, finds himself in hell, 'a drawing room in Second Empire style', along with two women - Ines and Estelle: the protagonists are condemned to each other's company for eternity. They are inclined to seduction but Garcin's masculine obsession with his personal identity insures that this possibility is permanently frustrated. Because the characters are dead, their identities are fixed and they can only attempt - without success - to ameliorate their situation through emotional trade-offs. At the end of the play they start all over again - the implication being that this frustrating impasse will go on for eternity. They realise then how they have been punished.The contrived situation of the play is used to illustrate what Szondi refers to as 'the key statement' and what is certainly one of the best known Sartrean dictums: 'l'enfer, c'est les Autres.'[132] The converse implication here is that Heaven is solipsism - a ridiculous notion. The impasse will continue as long as the characters refuse to engage in seduction - as long as they persist in struggling to use others to reinforce identity(thereby maintaining the law of exchange value with emotional trade-offs). Hell is not 'the other', it is the self-closure which prevents opening onto 'the other'. It is not beyond the roles to exceed their characters and in fact the impasse itself will sooner or later force them to do just this.

Writing such as this reflects an abandonment of the interface of personal relations in favour of an obsession with a fixed self-identity - a flight from the superficial to the interior. In the interactive sphere, the individual's emotion is rendered banal by being subsumed under the imperium of exchange value which makes possible the jargon of 'emotional needs', 'sexual hygiene' etc. Mutuality is the structure whereby the prudent emotional economist seeks to guarantee an adequate return on capital invested. In Barker's CASTLE, this concept is explicitly ridiculed by Skinner:

> *And he was quite a nice man, as far as they - there is a limit to those even of the best intentions - he talked of mutual pleasure - really, the banality! It really hurt my ears - after what we had - to talk of - MUTUAL PLEASURE - can you believe - the very words are...(She dries)*[33]

In the jargon of emotional economy, seduction is trivialised, marginalised or conceived of as simple fraud in which the victim's rationality is seen to have failed. With regard to this and the tradition considered very briefly above, the Stanislavsky-based acting discourse can be seen to correspond to a significant vision of the self expressed in twentieth century dramatic literature.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Brecht

At one time it was widely considered that Brecht and Stanislavsky represented opposite polarities with regard to theatrical production. More recently, however, this view has come to be challenged and it has been argued that both practically and theoretically the two have much in common.[1] In the first section of this study, I have suggested that both Brecht and Stanislavsky share a preoccupation with the truth/reality chimera and in the quotation from Stanislavsky cited above referring to the subordination of all elements in a drama to a 'ruling idea' it can be seen that this approximates fairly closely to the theoretical position Brecht sets out in the well-known 'Street Scene'[2] model of an epic theatre; Brecht argued that any element to be presented on stage should be subjected to a rigorous and conscious consideration as to its relevance to the point of the scene. Total verisimilitude, on the other hand, is unnecessary and can be confusing - in the 'Street Scene' all the spectator wishes to know is who was to blame for the accident. To this end the actor should demonstrate rather than simulate, the crucial point being that the audience should be able to form an accurate judgement concerning the event.

There are two characteristically Brechtian gestures implicit here - 'reality' is not shown but it is indicated and is very much the point of the demonstration.

- a demonstration, furthermore, which insists on its own hierarchical subordination as a second-order phenomenon. Secondly the principle of economy applies along with its predicate, selection, - only such elements as are absolutely necessary are shown. As indicated above, Brecht was particularly opposed to drama which aimed principally at arousing the emotions of the audience by luring them into what he saw as escapist illusion. Instead, he insisted that audiences should be compelled to maintain an attitude of critical detachment through the use of alienatory devices. Alienation was a concept which Brecht refined throughout his career from simple breaking of the illusion by continually making audiences aware that what they are viewing is theatrical fiction to 'making the familiar appear strange' in order to render it accessible to critical thought:

> *The new alienations are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today.*
>
> *44. For it seems impossible to alter what has long not been altered. We are always coming on things that are too obvious for us to bother to understand them.*[3]

Brecht further validates this practice through a seductive analogy with the scientific 'advance': his theatrical alienations will assist his audience -

> *...to develop that detached eye with which the great Galileo observed a swinging chandelier. He was amazed by this pendulum motion, as if*

he had not expected it and could not understand its occurring, and this enabled him to come on the rules by which it was governed. Here is the outlook, disconcerting but fruitful, which the theatre must provoke with its representations of human social life. It must amaze its public, and this can be achieved by a technique of alienating the familiar.[4]

It could be argued, on the basis of this, that Brecht, like Barker, is advancing a conception of art which 'brings chaos into order'. The scientist's pendulum, however, was 'real', a first-order phenomenon, and in his LIFE OF GALILEO, Brecht shows 'the great Galileo' rejecting Aristotelian myth or Christian doctrine where this conflicts with the evidence of his own eyes. Theatre, however, as Brecht himself insists is a second-order phenomenon - a fabricated 'representation'; unlike the alienations of 'reality', the alienations of theatre are therefore fabricated, second-order alienations - they are contrived. Much of Brecht's fuss with anti-realist, anti-illusionist 'devices' should be considered in the same light as the conjurer's posturings in persistently demonstrating empty hands, showing the inside of the top hat, revealing both sides of the handkerchief etc. The implication is that we see everything, no concealment, no tricks - we are in touch with 'reality' throughout - all of which serves to facilitate the foisting of an 'illusion'. Thus in THE LIFE OF GALILEO, Brecht represents the confrontation between Galileo and the Catholic Church as symbolic of the 'historic' struggle between Science and Religion, progress and reaction, Truth and Falsehood. The 'great' scientist is presented in the ideologically acceptable stereotype of 'the genius' but the principle alienation effect of the play lies

in portraying him as an anti-hero; he could be accused of selfishness, greed, dishonesty, arrogance and cowardice. In short, the audience are invited to judge everything except Galileo's science. Brecht, who acclaimed himself 'the Einstein of the new stage form',[5] states in his notes on scene 14:

> *What needs to be altered is the popular conception of heroism, ethical precepts and so on. The one thing that counts is one's contribution to science, and so forth.*[6]

He lays much emphasis on Galileo's 'brilliance' and his role as a populariser of science by writing not in elitist Latin but ordinary Italian:

> *I am still blamed for once having written an astronomical work in the language of the market place.*[7]

Of this particular work, 'Dialogo Sopra i Due Massimi Sistemi del Mondo', Koestler, in his account of Galileo in 'The Sleepwalkers' says:

> *It is true that Galileo was writing for a lay audience, and in Italian; his account however, was not a simplification but a distortion of the facts, not popular science, but misleading propaganda.*[8]

And Stillman Drake, translator and biographer of Galileo:

> *A drastic simplification of Copernicus may have seemed to him an easier didactic device. This is, at least, the charitable hypothesis. But the problem remains of how Galileo could commit the capital error, against which he had warned others so many times, of constructing theories in defiance of the best results of observation.*[9]

Galileo's 'Dialogue', which precipitated his trial, attempts to 'prove' the Copernican heliocentric system by an incorrect argument based on tidal movement which is unscientific in so far as it flies in the face of observable facts(there are two tides a day not one). He contradicts himself concerning the tilt in the axes of rotating bodies. He rejects as superstition, Kepler's correct explanation of tidal behaviour. Koestler sums up this 'popular' treatise thus:

> *The truth is that after his sensational discoveries in 1610, Galileo neglected both observational research and astronomic theory in favour of his propaganda crusade. By the time he wrote the 'Dialogue' he had lost touch with new developments in that field, and had forgotten even what Copernicus had said.'*[10]

In fact, there was no essential reason why the church needed to be committed to the defense of the geocentric model - other than the fact that Galileo appears to have gone out of his way to provoke offense among the clergy: Catholicism had successfully shifted its position on the sphericity of the earth. Recent research has suggested that the heliocentric/geocentric controversy was a 'cover' for more serious objections to Galileo which hinged on his espousal of

atomism, a theory inconsistent with the belief in trans-substantiation; this, of course, hit at the heart of Catholic doctrine.'[11] Brecht, however, presents a rigorously empirical, 'doubting' Galileo, who challenges all forms of dogma which conflict with his observation of the facts and his reason. What is therefore idealised and shielded from critical appraisal in Brecht's portrait is Galileo the 'Scientist' and 'Science' itself. He achieves this, like his hero, by ignoring or distorting the evidence available to make it fit his ideological preconceptions, covering up this manoeuvre by distracting the audience with his 'alienation' of Galileo qua bourgeois individualist hero.

Brecht's theatre is, therefore, essentially didactic and informed by Marxist ideology. Marxism, of course, postulates a 'truth' and a 'reality'(scientific materialism), one aspect of which involves regarding character as socially determined - as opposed to self-generating (bourgeois individualism). According to Szondi's theory, the drama can sweep away everything apart from the purely interpersonal - human interaction:

> *Here, on the other hand, the interpersonal relation becomes entirely thematic and is removed from the certainty of form to the uncertainty of content.*'[12]

Brecht, who was well aware that he was opposing 'drama' per se, privileges a particular ideology and then subordinates the human interaction to this. In many hands, this would be a formula for mechanical and crudely reductive

demonstration. Brecht, however, was an artist who revelled in subtlety and contradiction:

> *It is too great a simplification if we make the actions fit the character and the character fit the actions: the inconsistencies which are to be found in the actions and characters of real people cannot be shown like this. The laws of motion of a society are not to be demonstrated by 'perfect examples', for 'imperfection'(inconsistency) is an essential part of motion and of the thing moved. It is only necessary - but absolutely necessary - that there should be something approaching experimental conditions, i.e. that a counter-experiment should now and then be conceivable. Altogether this is a way of treating society as if all its actions were performed as experiments.'*[3]

Although the word 'demonstration' is used here, this could be read as an argument for an heuristic theatre - 'experiments' submitted to the critical scrutiny of the audience. As we have seen with GALILEO, the terms of debate are in fact limited to the ideological perspectives according to which the experiment is being conducted. In 'The Short Organum', the science thematic emerges as the dominant idea and Brecht clearly accepts the general Marxist elevation of Science as the touchstone of ultimate Truth.

> *The bourgeois class, which owes to science an advancement that it was able, by ensuring that it alone enjoyed the fruits, to convert*

into domination, knows very well that its rule would come to, an end if the scientific eye were turned on its own undertakings.[14]

In GALILEO, 'Science' is further defined through its opposition to the obscurantism of religion and 'myth' which serves the interests of a reactionary political establishment. This simplistic opposition is itself a myth which has served as an impediment to more rigorous appraisal - especially of science. Theatre must be informed by 'a new science of society' - and in 'A Short Organum' Brecht makes constant reference to political, historical and natural scientific discourses.

The theatre has to become geared into reality if it is to be in a position to turn out effective representations of reality, and to be allowed to do so.

24. But this makes it simpler for the theatre to edge as close as possible to the apparatus of education and mass communication. For although we cannot bother it with the raw material of knowledge in all its variety, which would stop it from being enjoyable, it is still free to find enjoyment in teaching and enquiring. It constructs its workable representations of society, which are then in a position to influence society, wholly and entirely as a game: for those who are constructing society it sets out society's experiences, past and present alike, in such a manner that the audience can 'appreciate' the feelings, insights and impulses which are distilled by the wisest,

most active and most passionate among us from the events of the day or the century.'[5]

I have quoted this passage in full because it seems to me to illustrate a number of significant points about Brechtian theatre: firstly the importance of the 'reality' principle is clearly indicated and the mechanistic ('geared into''workable') and economistic('turned out''apparatus''raw material''distilled') metaphors emphasise the nature of this reality. Secondly, there is a clear endorsement of an academicism(in the pejorative sense of this word). Audiences are not to be troubled with the 'raw material' of knowledge since they are not capable of 'appreciating' this. Instead they are to be the recipients of the suitably processed('distilled') 'feelings, insights and impulses' of an elite ('the most passionate etc.') Thirdly, the hitherto implicit authoritarianism is rendered explicit: theatre must conform to this prescription - 'to be allowed'.

As I have already indicated the whole Brechtian ethos is almost diametrically opposed to the kind of dramatic theatre that Barker's writing demands and indeed that Barker himself has put forward in poetry, prologues and his theoretical text 'Arguments for a Theatre'. Compare the following with the quotation cited above from Brecht's 'Short Organum':

The Theatre of Catastrophe addresses itself to those who suffer the maiming of the imagination. All mechanical art, all ideological art, (the entertaining, the informative) intensifies the pain but

simultaneously heightens the unarticulated desire for the restitution of moral speculation, which is the business of theatre. The Theatre of Catastrophe is therefore a theatre for the offended. It has no dialogue with

Those who make poles of narrative and character
Those who proclaim clarity and responsibility'[16]

The real end of drama in this period must be not the reproduction of reality, critical or otherwise, (the traditional model of the Royal Court play, socialistic, voyeuristic) but speculation - not what is (now unbearably decadent) but what might be, what is imaginable. The subject then becomes not man-in-society, but knowledge itself, and the protagonist not the man of action (rebel or capitalist as source of pure energy) but the struggler with self. So in an era when sexuality is simulataneously cheap, domestic and soon-to-be-forbidden, desire becomes the field of enquiry most likely to stimulate a creative disorder.'[17]

Barker's repeated injunction that audiences should be 'honoured' explicitly rejects the Brechtian notion of theatre being 'distilled'; as dramatist he lays no claim to superior knowledge, political awareness or moral insight. It is this which allows the charge of elitism, so often levelled against Barker, to be reversed and turned instead against those who insist upon popular appeal, 'clarity', comprehensibility, a 'message' - which usually carry the presumption

that the audience are less sensitive, less intelligent and less well informed than those who demand these qualities.

Of the theatre practitioners and theorists I have considered so far, none have been British, though all of them, to a greater or lesser degree, have influenced the British stage. The role of the English Stage Company at The Royal Court Theatre has been pre-eminent - certainly from the mid-fifties till the seventies - in developing new dramatic writing and innovative approaches to performance. The former aspect of the Court's work has dominated the general public perception, while the latter, though attracting less attention, has nevertheless exerted a considerable influence throughout British theatre:

> *The Company were to go beyond simply enticing writers into the theatre with the promise of a production: they wanted to find a contemporary style in dramatic work, acting, decor, and production. Thus by presenting new or rarely seen foreign works in exciting productions, it was hoped to stimulate English authors.*[18]

The individual most associated with the evolution of a 'house style' at the Court is William Gaskill who was, for many years, Artistic Director. He built onto the realist, socially concerned, 'kitchen sink' style of the early Osborne/Arden/Wesker plays a growing awareness of Brechtian stagecraft and theatrical praxis which informed decisively the dramaturgy of Edward Bond and a whole generation of 'Court-trained' directors. In fact the Gaskill legacy is still evident in the attitude and directorial policies of the current Artistic

Director, Max Stafford-Clark with whom Gaskill cooperated to develop the distinctive style and practice of Joint Stock Theatre Company. He directed the actor's focus of attention away from the individual psychology of the character and towards the socio-economic significance of their behaviour. This process is well exemplified in the much discussed 'lesson' of the cadged cigarette with which he commenced rehearsals of MOTHER COURAGE at the RSC(1962).

> *I decided to begin with a simple Socratic dialogue. I cadged a cigarette from one of the actresses....and then asked the group why she had given me the cigarette. The first answers were all psychological - her generosity, her sycophancy, my meanness. Very gradually I led them to understand that the action was a social action and a habitual one, in which the economic value of the cigarette was a factor. This led to very simple improvisations which were always followed by an analysis of the actions in the scene. In a two-handed scene each actor would narrate the actions as objectively as possible, sometimes in the third person, and this narration was analysed over and over again till both actors would agree on the exact sequence of events; that is, they would tell the same story.'*[19]

Gaskill describes this process as 'the stripping of action to present only its social and economic meaning'.[20] He adds that it was only in his work with Joint Stock on FANSHEN(1975). The fact that this, most celebrated example of Gaskill's

theoretical practice focusses on an object - the cigarette - is paradigmatic. It will be recalled that Szondi excluded objects from the drama:

> *Most radical of all was the exclusion of that which could not express itself - the world of objects - unless it entered the realm of interpersonal relationships.*[21]

Clearly, the cigarette is part of a pattern of interpersonal relations in Gaskill's case but he insists on elevating the object to a dominant role and furthermore the identity of the object is no longer dependant upon the particular interpersonal context; it has become a 'thing-in-itself' because it has 'economic value' - a reference to a value structure external to the play. This approach is carried through into staging with the tendency to foreground solid, selected objects as properties. The characters then have the possibility of relating not only to each other, but directly to objects which have ceased to be merely instrumental. Bond, who absorbed much of Gaskill's 'Brechtian' theory, exemplifies this dramatic interest in the object. In SAVED, for instance, not only is the cigarette an issue in interpersonal relations but the pram and the chair, in terms of their weight and their behavioural characteristics, play important roles in the development of the action. It is interesting to note, however, that particular objects introduced into a drama, even though their initial presence may be ideologically authorised, often escape into ambiguity and take on alternative and quite contradictory meanings. This seductive, polysemic quality of objects is most evident in children's play where the pleasure lies in seducing the object away from its 'proper' function.

Gaskill's dramaturgy, of which the cigarette 'dialogue' provides a paradigm, reflects an analysis of human interaction based on exchange value, an extension and analogue of the operations of capitalist society. As a system it is logical, coherent and clear. This latter quality, clarity, was one of the hallmarks of Gaskill's direction which is, again, thoroughly Brechtian. The insistence that the actors should arrive at 'the same story' removes the possibility of ambiguity and ensures that in conflict situations the audience will nevertheless be presented with a single view. For a didactic theatre, this is a logical process. It amounts to interpreting the actions presented. As used to be said of Brecht - we are presented not with 'life' but 'an analysis of life'. Brecht himself was particularly concerned that audiences should come away from his plays with the correct message; to this end, in his work with the Berliner Ensemble he was continually fine tuning performances in order to manipulate audience sympathies more effectively - MOTHER COURAGE and GALILEO being notable examples.

On the whole, Brecht was more or less indifferent as to *how* an actor obtained his/her performance: the result, the effect upon the audience, was what really mattered:

> *Brecht never cared how his actors worked. He didn't tell them to go home and do this or that or to go behind the set and concentrate. He didn't give a damn about the mechanics they used, he just cared about the results.*[2-2]

There was, however, Brecht's assertion that the epic actor should 'show' a character while simultaneously maintaining his/her own detachment and in 'showing' should also show his/her attitude to the character. In A SHORT ORGANUM Brecht cites the example of Laughton playing Galileo - 'the showman Laughton does not disappear in the Galileo whom he is showing'.[23] Stanislavsky would probably criticise this formulation as tending to encourage actors to perform the effect rather than the action itself. Thus a performer who considers an action to be humourous could easily feel permitted to be 'funny'. Or an actor who feels his character's rage to be wholly unjustified can rage in an obnoxious manner. Stanislavsky would point out that the first character does not intend to be 'funny' and the second feels quite entitled to be angry. While Brecht largely ignored actors' psychotechnique, British Brechtian directors, such as Gaskill, have tended to adopt Stanislavsky's system of units and objectives: actors must at all times have an intention expressible in terms of 'I want to.' The complete, connected structure of these objectives then forms the skeleton of the play. In his autobiography, A SENSE OF DIRECTION, Gaskill says that it was only in his work with Joint Stock, most notably on FANSHEN, that, in a 'democratic' company of politically committed performers(working on a play set in a 'post-revolutionary' society), he was able to move away altogether from the focal point of individual psychology. His comment:

> *Gradually I got used to seeing a play as a series of actions governed by decisions. A linear concept....*[24]

is wholly consistent with the rationalist approach, the word 'decision' implying the conscious, considered

and purposeful working of the individual or collective will. However, the moment of decision itself, involving as it does a real choice, a crisis which cannot be resolved by the smooth extension of logic, is essentially irrational; where reason and experience dictate the outcome there is no decision. The latter, as its etymology indicates, is an act of violence - a cutting. Kierkegaard put it more bluntly when he said the instant of decision was madness. It is true that Brecht was interested in the decision - from the point of view of the different options available to a character at any particular moment of crisis. But for Brecht this is always an historical frame, 'objective', teleological - rather than subjective and ontological - which enables the decision to be labelled correct or incorrect. This is obvious in GALILEO which is bathed in the light of historico - ideological retrospection - the penultimate Scene 14 quite melodramatically so.

The Brecht/Gaskill approach has continued as the 'house' style of the Royal Court and many directors currently prominent in British theatre have had their directorial approach shaped by the Court. This 'style' was in the process of being formed in the late sixties according to Jack Shepherd:

> *During the period when I worked intensively at the Court a defined way of rehearsing the actors was in the process of being evolved. The actors were encouraged to regard themselves as servants of the play. The text had to be spoken in such a way that the audience would be drawn to the narrative of the play - not the charismatic(or otherwise) nature of the performance. A good actor was someone who*

could draw attention to the thing that was said, as opposed to the way it was being spoken. Naturalness, not naturalism. Altruism, not egotism. And above all, in rehearsal, there was no substitute for doing. As Bill Gaskill repeatedly said: 'Don't talk about it - do it.' And much more.

What made it difficult was that a lot of the theory tended to run right across the grain of an actor's instinct. It was very hard to find a synthesis.25

Max Stafford-Clark, the current Artistic director, absorbed and refined this approach in his co-direction with Gaskill of FANSHEN(Joint Stock 1975):

The dialectical techniques used in the FANSHEN rehearsals to break down the content of each scene had been refined into a sophisticated critical tool. Stafford-Clark, as he recalls it, 'discovered Brecht'. Ultimately, the approach supposes a political point of view - what the action is intended to show has to be decided in political rather than psychological terms - and certain aesthetic preferences come into play: the emotional temperature is muted, the stage cleared of distractions, the acting honed to essentials.[26]

Stafford-Clark, himself said of this production:

Surprisingly late in rehearsal (the fifth week?) I caught on to the dialectical method and was able to refocus whole scenes and

characters based on the political line of the play - and not on how each actor thought his character would behave in a particular situation. Bill came in late one morning and sat watching. At lunchtime he took me aside and said how good it was...[27]

Stafford-Clark bears witness to the style's continuance in his book, 'Letters to George'. This text consists of an account of his (Stafford-Clark's) production of Farquhar's THE RECRUITING OFFICER expressed through the artificial device of the director writing letters to the author('George') concerning the progress of his play in production; it is subtitled on the cover as 'A director's handbook of techniques.' Even the play itself attests to a sense of continuity, since Gaskill staged a notable 'Brechtian' version of the play at the National Theatre in 1963, influenced by Brecht's own version of the same text, TRUMPETS AND DRUMS, which had formed part of the Berliner Ensemble's tour of 1956. Gaskill's production had at the time amounted to a decisive break with what had become a conventional and, at its worst, extremely cliched 'Restoration' style and led on to a new wave of 'Brechtianised' classics of which his own production of MACBETH(Court 1966) was a conspicuous example.

Stafford-Clark acknowledges these antecedents, directly:

..it must be acknowledged that Brecht focused attention on your satire of small-town life, and prepared the way for a more accurate and complete view, which had become obscured by Restoration camp.

> *Certainly, Bill Gaskill acknowledges as much when citing reasons for choosing the play for the National in 1963. And, although Marxist theory doesn't explain every single aspect of human behaviour, it's probably true that an approach to your play that didn't mess about with the text but, nonetheless, chose a superobjective for each character, determined by class interest, would lead to a pretty well-muscled production.*[28]

He emphasises the importance of historical research for director and cast, criticising Brecht for being 'casual' with his version:

> *For a Marxist to update the period of the play but update only some of the sums of money, leaving others as they stand, thus preventing any financial overview of the world he creates, seems sloppy and careless.*[29]

Throughout the early days of rehearsal, considerable use is made of Roy Porter's 'English Society in the Eighteenth Century' which provides 'the wisdom of Marxist hindsight'. Indeed this background research is significant in determining the characters' 'superobjectives':

> *Even at this early stage, it's possible to speculate on the superobjectives of some of the characters. By this, George, I simply mean their main goal over the course of the whole play, from which their other behaviour will spring.*[30]

Altogether, Stafford-Clark claims that three weeks of rehearsal time for the play were spent with the cast sitting 'round a table with pencils and rubbers', 'breaking it down into objectives and actions'. This, he adds, provides 'a basic structure'. Firstly, the company decide upon the superobjective of each character for the particular scene under consideration, - presumably bearing in mind the character's overall superobjective. Whereupon the director describes his 'Stanislavsky-based' method thus:

> *With these particular objectives in mind, the scene is then broken down into 'actions'.*
>
> *An action has to be expressed by a transitive verb and gives the character's intention or tactic for that particular thought. For example, if I was speaking to you at this moment, George, my overall intention for the scene might be 'to teach George'. Along the way the actions I would employ could be 'to interest', 'to grip', 'to instruct', 'to fascinate' or even, and here I would be a bit ambitious, 'to enthrall'. The fact that I could fail with these glorious intentions, and in fact end up puzzling or confusing or even, heavens forbid, boring you, is not my problem as an actor. That's not my intention. One definition of bad acting would be when an actor plays the result of his action (e.g. 'bores') and not the intention itself(e.g. 'educates'or 'interests'). It's up to the other actors in the scene to play the response, not for the protagonist to act a judgement on himself.*[31]

This is clearly a version of Stanislavsky's 'logical and connected' chain of objectives and Stafford-Clark's 'actions' could each be prefaced by the Russian theorist's 'I want to's. Though he quite explicitly rejects the Brechtian notion that the epic actor **should** show a judgement on his/her character, it is interesting that Stafford-Clark makes his actors read their speeches prefacing each with the agreed 'intention'. Thus, in Act III Scene 2, Sergeant Kite addresses the disguised Silvia thus:

> *KITE: Sir, he in the plain coat is Captain Plume, I am his serjeant, and will take my oath on't.*[34]

Once the 'action' for this particular speech had been decided - i.e. 'befriends', the actor playing this role would say 'Kite befriends Wilful' before speaking the line. All the other lines in the play would be similarly prefaced with an agreed action - which explains why the process took up such large part of the rehearsal schedule. While on the one hand, the structure of connected objectives is Stanislavskian, on the other, the actor's continual use of the third person for his/her character can be seen as a Brechtian distancing device - though Stafford-Clark does not go as far as Brecht who suggested putting such statements in the past tense. Further the constant disruption of the flow of dialogue operates in an anti-illusionistic manner ('flow' is particularly important in Seduction) discouraging actors from becoming absorbed in their character's various encounters. Finally, the technique subordinates speech to the intention of the speaker; with this approach, linguistic utterance is absorbed into the 'gestus' described by the 'action'. Language is stripped of any kind of privilege, of polyvalence or even ambiguity. Though this initial analysis may be

modified when the scene is 'moved' and the actors come 'off the book', Stafford-Clark is clear as to its value:

> *It treats analysis as a more formidable tool in cracking a scene than instinct.*[33]

Again, this is a particularly Brechtian point and the tools of analysis are logic, reason and historical research. An approach to production which laid stress on seduction would by no means need to reject logical analysis; it would, however, be aware of the limits of same and be conscious that many of the most dramatic encounters arise where reason breaks down. This is most overtly acknowledged in Barker's case with his collection of ten short plays entitled THE POSSIBILITIES. These base themselves upon moments when a character refuses the apparently 'rational' course of action. As the cover of the published text states:

> *In an age of relentless persuasion the final resort of freedom might reside in an instinctive refusal of logic or argument. Taking this as his starting point, Barker's ten short plays explore the conflict between human dignity and the rationalisations of ideologists and humanists alike.*[34]

Similarly, Barker has stated that one of his most acclaimed texts, THE CASTLE, is about 'the power of instinct'.

This approach to performance of the Court, their 'house style', has been widely influential beyond the confines of Sloane Square. Not only has this theatre been a significant 'training ground' for young directors but it has been a force to be reckoned by all those concerned with 'progressive' theatre. Howard Davies, discussing the beginnings of a career which has now brought him to the National Theatre, describes how, as director of the New Vic Studio in Bristol in the early 70s, he sought to engage Royal Court actors:

> *The only way I could implement the new play policy I was hoping to initiate was to rely upon actors who'd worked with Gaskill or Stafford-Clark and who understood the language of those plays, those writers and those fringe groups with whom they'd been associated.*[35]

Davies went on to the RSC where he firmly established his Brechtian credentials by directing Brecht's MAN IS MAN, SCHWEIK IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, Bond's BINGO and THE BUNDLE. He was in overall control of the RSC Warehouse in London which during its brief existence staged a remarkable series of new plays. Three of these were by Barker, one of which, THE LOUD BOY'S LIFE, was directed by Davies. One of the other Barker plays at the Warehouse, THE HANG OF THE GAOL, was directed by an associate of Davies, Bill Alexander. Alexander had worked with Davies at The New Vic Studio in Bristol - 'we talk the same language'[36]- and had come to the Warehouse via The Royal Court and RSC Stratford. He subsequently went on to direct two more Barker plays in The Pit at the Barbican - CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES and DOWNCHILD. At the Royal Court itself eight Barker plays have been staged - two directed by Gaskill - CHEEK(1970) and WOMEN BEWARE WOMEN(1986), - also NO ONE WAS SAVED(1970), STRIPWELL(1975), FAIR

SLAUGHTER(1977), NO END OF BLAME(1981), VICTORY(1983), THE LAST SUPPER(1988). Danny Boyle, who directed VICTORY and later THE BITE OF THE NIGHT at the RSC Pit(1988), described himself as 'Court-trained' with a Brechtian/Marxist approach to production.[37] As I have already suggested, for a time, Barker was regarded by the RSC and The Court as a left-wing political dramatist whose main strength lay in satire. From the early eighties, however, the nature of his work no longer supported such a characterisation; it became clear in plays such as CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES that political satire was not Barker's main interest. From this point on, directors evinced a distinct lack of enthusiasm. Stafford-Clark refused to stage a commissioned drama - THE BITE OF THE NIGHT. The RSC similarly turned down THE EUROPEANS. The main reason for this lies in the very clear notions which directors such as Gaskill, Stafford-Clark, Davies and Alexander have of what a play should be and the fact that the Gaskill/Stafford-Clark directorial tradition, strongly rooted in Brecht, Stanislavsky and social realism, finds itself at a loss when it attempts to 'analyse' a Barker text. Not only this, but Barker requires the director to redefine his/her role in the production process.

In the Brechtian tradition, the performance text, (as opposed to the literary text - the dialogue,) presents the audience - as the cliche goes - not with 'life' but with an 'analysis of life'. Speech, movement, the complete stage picture are mobilised to demonstrate the process of cause and effect. So that in scene one of MOTHER COURAGE, Brecht arranged the movement to show how Mother Courage's business acumen provokes the recruiters into taking a 'professional' attitude towards her sons.[38] This reinforces the play's central thesis: Mother

Courage's loss of her entire family is owing to her choice of livelihood; her business sustains the war which is slowly destroying her. Because Brecht effectively interpreted his own work, this leaves very little for other directors of plays such as MOTHER COURAGE to do - apart from follow the 'model book'. Gaskill, himself, admits as much:

> *In the second season I was foolhardy enough to tackle MOTHER COURAGE....But it was impossible for me or Jocelyn Herbert, who designed it, to forget the Ensemble's production, nor did we want to. Brecht's direction of his own play...was the product of years of thought and preparation....Every moment, every image, was honed down to its simplest and most meaningful statement; its effect was both political and aesthetic. You cannot add anything without destroying that economy.*[39]

This sense of creative redundancy, however, does not apply to 'classic' literary texts where the director is free to impose his/her own interpretation. For directors such as Gaskill and Stafford-Clark this business of clarification is perhaps the main function of the director - the removal of amibiguities, the imposition of clear-cut linear structures of cause and effect. For the drama to be effective it must be comprehended. It is possible to posit, alternatively, that the function of the director is to ensure that the performance is interesting or seductive; if he/she can achieve this while preserving as much ambiguity as is possible, so much the better. To be moved or fascinated and not to understand why is, arguably, the most valuable experience an audience can take from a theatrical performance.

Gaskill's own comment on Barker illustrates this gulf I have been discussing between theatre and writer:

> *Like Bond's early work it is personal and intimate. If it has a political message, it isn't clear.....*
>
> *At one time Howard would have unquestionably been a Court writer, championed over a number of years. But even if I'd stayed at the Court I don't know that I would have taken him on. It would have involved me in the same kind of difficult relationship with a sombre and individual imagination that I'd had with Bond.*[40]

Gaskill goes on to point out that writers have become 'rootless', offering their plays to a variety of theatrical establishments:

> *This ought to be healthy but in practice it means there is no real critical dialogue between writer and theatre.*[41]

This is the kind of dialogue which existed between Gaskill and Bond - a relationship, the former makes clear, that he did not feel able to sustain in the case of the latter and was unwilling to engage in with Barker. I have tried to indicate in this study some of the reasons why this should have been the case - reasons which go well beyond a difference of opinion as to the role of theatre but extend into the practicalities of staging the text . Gaskill, while clearly recognising Barker as a major talent, simultaneously makes quite obvious the grounds of his objections to his work in the quotations cited above -

'personal', 'intimate', no 'clear' 'political message', 'a sombre and individual imagination'. Gaskill also talks about the Court sheltering the writer from commercial pressures and, in doing so, tending to shelter them from 'the responsibility of communicating with an audience.' In Bond's case, he feels that this has led to a 'dishonest' self-delusion:

> *Bond once said he wrote his plays for the people of Southend. He doesn't answer the question, 'Why aren't they done there?' Barker has faced the reality of the limited audience who see his plays and takes pride in being elitist.*[42]

Yet Bond's claim to be writing theatre for the masses is identical to Brecht's whose work has met with a similar lack of success in this particular objective. In fact, it is largely the respect for Brecht's status as a twentieth century 'classic' which leads to his work being performed and this status is founded, in the main, upon his popularity within educational institutions - a popularity not by and large reflected in professional theatre - commercial or otherwise. If one considers the numbers who are 'exposed' to Brecht in the course of their education, the amount of professional performance is remarkably sparse. Gaskill would probably argue that Brecht's legacy does not essentially comprise the plays he left but rather a whole theatrical praxis; merely to reproduce the Brechtian 'classics' is to betray the spirit of the master. Indeed, it could be argued that Gaskill's main achievement lay in developing Brecht's dramaturgy, particularly in his work with Joint Stock.

What was perhaps the most significant aspect of the Joint Stock 'method' was the collective way the plays were created. A topic would be selected - usually a non-dramatic text would provide the basis for this - William Hinton's eponymous historical account of the effects of the Chinese revolution in a small rural community in the case of FANSHEN, Heathcote Williams book on the Hyde Park Corner 'performers' in the case of SPEAKERS; the company would meet for two weeks of 'workshop': this involved discussion, research and improvisation with a dramatist present. There would then be a break of a few weeks to enable the writer to produce a script, whereupon the company would reassemble and go into rehearsal in the normal manner. Though Brecht was no democrat, he approached the business of production in a thoroughly collective manner. Not only was there the 'collaboration' in producing scripts which he would then 'try out' on friends and acquaintances, but, as well as his unusually close relationship with designers and composers, it was his practice to thrash out the staging of individual scenes in lengthy discussion and experimentation with all concerned.

Obviously, the collective approach of a company like Joint Stock, because the theatrical text has to a large extent been mediated through a group, will reflect the method of its composition. In their discussion and argument, members of the company will seek to convince each other by employing logic and referring to the authority of established discourses - political, historical, sociological, psychological etc. Of course, aesthetic consideration will also play a part in all this but it will tend to be a subordinate one: the focus will be elsewhere. Above all, there would be no place for the irrational in such a set-up. It is interesting, however, to reflect upon the varying perceptions of the

Gaskill/Stafford-Clark/Joint Stock style. Jack Shepherd, in the quotation cited above, indicates that the method ran 'across the grain of an actor's instinct'. Simon Callow has bewailed directorial oppression at considerable length in his book - 'Being an Actor'(Methuen 1984) and argues that all the early work of the company was dominated by the directors and very far from being 'democratic'. As Stafford-Clark himself cynically admits - 'superficial encouragement of democracy, followed by autocratic final decision-taking'[43]. As I have pointed out, when the artistic directorship of the company was abolished in 1979 and it was managed along more genuinely democratic lines, the actors chose to stage two Barker plays which were already scripted and therefore offered very limited possibilities as far as the Joint Stock method was concerned. This has been a characteristic reaction to Barker who has tended to appeal to the instincts of the actor while confounding the orthodoxies of directorial wisdom.

CHAPTER NINE: Grotowski/ Academic Researchers

In the second half of the twentieth century, one of the most outstanding and influential contributors to performance and performance theory has undoubtedly been the Polish director, Jerzy Grotowski. Initially he saw himself as carrying on the work of Stanislavsky:

> *there was a time when I wanted to be Stanislavsky. To begin with this naturally took the form of imitation on the professional level.*[1]

> *As an actor I was obsessed with Stanislavsky: I was a fanatic. I thought that this was the key opening all doors to creativity.*[2]

His instincts however increasingly drew him in the direction of theatrical minimalism. His quest was to discover what, in essence, theatre was and to achieve this he proceeded by his *via negativa* to strip away all that seemed to him merely accessory. Like Stanislavsky and Meyerhold he quickly came to the preliminary conclusion that theatre was about the creativity of the actor. His two predecessors were inclined to be enthralled by their directorial visions and tended to encounter the actor more as an obstruction than an asset; in order to achieve the theatre of their dreams, the actor had to be manufactured to a

certain specification. In Grotowski's case, his whole project was 'research' - an open exploration of the possibilities of the unencumbered actor:

> *But can the theatre exist without actors? I know of no example of this. One could mention the puppet show. Even here, however, an actor is to be found behind the scenes, although of another kind.*
>
> *Can the theatre exist without an audience? At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance. So we are left with the actor and the spectator. We can thus define the theatre as "what takes place between spectator and actor".*[3].

In taking this position, Grotowski is going beyond the theoretical conception of 'the drama' which I have been using in this study. He exemplifies a strand of twentieth century thinking most notably articulated by Artaud which has sought to detach theatre from dramatic literature:

> *Dialogue - something written and spoken - does not specifically belong to the stage but to books. The proof is that there is a special section in literary history textbooks on drama as a subordinate branch in the history of spoken language.*
>
> *I maintain that the stage is a tangible, physical place that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language.*[4]

Whereas, for Szondi, dialogue is paramount:

> *The absolute dominance of dialogue - that is, of interpersonal communication, reflects the fact that the drama consists only of the reproduction of interpersonal relations, is only cognizant of what shines forth within this sphere.*[5]

Even in the case of 'dramatic' monologue, the crucial factor is the silent presence of another person or persons. For Grotowski, the essential is the encounter between actor and audience; in the context of the drama, the audience generally experience the encounter indirectly via the protagonists on stage. We are discussing here the question of **distances**and **frames** - a much argued topic in twentieth century theatre. Stanislavsky preserved his audiences behind an inviolable fourth wall. Meyerhold wished tear this down to unite performers and audience in an ecstatic union. Brecht while uniting performers and audience in the same physical space insisted on his audiences maintaining an intellectual distance (alienation). In all cases, however, even Grotowski's paratheatre where audiences can be actively involved for extended periods of time, the audience will reflect on and evaluate their experience within the frame of 'theatre'.

On a superficial reflection, within the context of Seduction theory, it would seem easy to dismiss Grotowski as yet another truth/authenticity based practitioner, especially considering the asceticism and religious overtones of much of his work. The rhetoric of his quest continually postulates the chimeras

of the 'truth' discourse. The very notion of an 'essential' theatre - i.e. theatre in its 'true' or 'proper' self-identity - exemplifies this straight away. This leads on to the search for 'origins'; like Meyerhold, Grotowski initially pursued dreams of an ecstatic ur-festival:

> *I was of the opinion that as it was in fact primitive rites that brought theatre into being, so through a return to ritual.....may be discovered that ceremonial of direct, living collaboration, a particular interaction(rare in our times), a direct, open, free and authentic response....*[6]

In order to achieve this, the actor must rigorously pursue the physically 'authentic' act by removing all the 'blockages', healing the mind/body split and regaining 'primitive indivisibility':

> *If the act takes place, then the actor, that is to say the human being, transcends the state of incompleteness to which we condemn ourselves in everyday life.*[7]

For the actor, the process involves 'self-penetration', an exposure of his or her most intimate impulses, - as Grotowski habitually put it - a giving of the self. This is accompanied by a rigorous discipline:

> *The more we become absorbed in what is hidden inside us, in the excess, in the exposure, in the self-penetration, the more rigid must be the external discipline....*[8]

Grotowski, like Strasberg, holds up the model of a 'natural' expressivity which modern social and environmental pressures have distorted and repressed. In this psychosomatic approach, mental blockages and deceits are present in the body: the body is the mind. Jennifer Kumiega describes Grotowski's underlying assumptions thus:

> *firstly - that there exists something in the nature of a natural, organic flow of impulse towards action, sound and expression in the individual human being; and secondly - that this flow, if released, is in some way 'creative' and forms the material for artistic expression.*[9]

Thus far such guidelines equate with the solipsistic introversion which stems from the concentration/emotion memory nexus of Stanislavsky and is further emphasised in Strasberg's 'Method'. Although Grotowski has in common with the System/Method tradition the insistence that the performer undergo or commit a 'genuine' emotional experience which engages the audience, he departs from them in certain very fundamental respects which I feel many of his imitators and commentators, possibly led astray by his 'truth'/'authenticity' rhetoric, have failed to appreciate.

In the first place, Grotowski rejects the 'intentionlity' so characteristic of 'System' and 'Method'. The exercise of the will merely serves to perpetuate the mind/body dichotomy and is therefore an impediment to the 'total act'. The

objectives structure, whereby the performer fully stimulates and controls his or her own performance, is therefore useless. Grotowski insists that the stimulus must somehow be 'the other':

> Each physical action is preceded by an inner movement, which flows from the interior of the body, unknown but concrete. The impulse does not exist without a partner. Not in the sense of a partner in acting, but in the sense of another human being. Or simply - another being.'[10]

10. THE THEATRE OF JERZY GROTOWSKI.p.135.

This is a point consistently made by Grotowski: referring back to his essential theatre definition - theatre takes place **between** the actor and the spectator. He attempted to explore the nature of this non-intentional state largely through his *exercises corporels*. This sort of physical work, comprising the most tangible aspects of 'Grotowski' was often misapplied - to a degree because of Grotowski's own monastic-style asceticism and the religious connotations of his discourse:

> *Some actors, in the so-called exercises corporels, torture and martyrise themselves. This not transcending because it is active. Transcendence is a question of not defending ourselves in the face of transcendence. There is something which we must do which surpasses us; even a simple somersault in the exercises corporels, with certain limited but real risks that we must take; there may also possibly be pain - it is enough not to defend ourselves, to take the risks.''*

Concerning the same exercise Grotowski commented:

> *You have to discover the unknown, and the secret is revealed by the very nature of the one in action....It is not knowing how to do things that is necessary, but not hesitating when faced with a challenge, when you have to achieve the unknown, and do it leaving the 'way' (in so far as this is possible) to your own nature.'*[12]

The phrase 'own nature' is typical of the 'truth' orientation of Grotowski's discourse. The conception of a 'true' and 'proper' 'own nature' is rejected by seduction theory. The point here is that the processes he is discussing are processes I have described under the heading of Seduction. There is the challenge, the sense of risk, putting one's identity into play. Seduction is essentially irrational, so it is important not to hesitate otherwise calculation and reason will intervene. The consciously formulated intention is invariably 'rational' within the context of one's established sense of identity. Also implicit in the notion of the seductive challenge is the disappearance of causality. I do not want to achieve the somersault; I merely do not resist the attraction of the somersault. It may be argued that this is only a physical challenge but Grotowski's approach, as we have seen, maintains the unity of mind and body. Grotowski's comments about 'surpassing oneself' are analogous to the notion of putting one's identity into play. One engages in action which is 'improper' - not necessarily immoral, merely uncharacteristic: though it may often appear immoral within the context of the particular character - e.g. to give money away may appear scandalously immoral to a miser.

According to Jennifer Kumiega, Grotowski makes continual use of the terms 'provocation' and 'challenge' in describing the relation between actor and audience:

> *If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrifice reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration.'*[3]

There are two points here which are common to seduction: firstly there is the seductive principle of 'aiming off' - in order to challenge the audience, one challenges oneself. Secondly there is the seductive principle of reversal in that conventional weakness - sacrifice, self-revelation - becomes strength. It may be objected that I am dismissing Grotowski's most fundamental principle in problematising his 'authenticity' discourse. However, what is an 'authentic' emotion? Who validates it? Grotowski's approach rejects absolutely all 'shamming' or bluff. This is presumably what Grotowski perceives as sham. But what about the actor who shams successfully? Who claims to have deceived Grotowski? Grotowski can then counterclaim that the actor was in fact 'authentic' although he(the actor) **thought** he was shamming. If one accepts that self-delusion is possible, then any grounds of authenticity are swept away. What if 'the authentic' is banal? Clearly Grotowski believes that this cannot be the case. One does not dedicate one's life to the pursuit of banality. Seduction, which is never banal, refuses to deal in anything other than appearances. Instead of

saying, 'This gesture affects me profoundly - it must be "true"', - one merely says, 'This gesture is profoundly seductive.'

In the section entitled 'American Encounter' of TOWARDS A POOR THEATRE, Grotowski reaffirms and expands upon the points I have made above in response to a question from Richard Schechner about his 'artistic ethic':

> *In order to create one must, each time, take all the risks of failure. That means we cannot repeat an old or familiar route.....'*[14]

> *..from the objective point of view the deciding factor in art is the result. In that way, art is immoral. He is right who has the result. That's the way it is. But in order to get the result - and this is the paradox - you must not look for it. If you look for it you will block the natural creative process....'*[15]

There is the foregrounding of the relationship to 'the other':

> The principle is that the actor, in order to fulfil himself, must not work for himself. Through penetrating his relationship with others - studying the elements of contact - the actor will discover what is in him. He must give himself totally.'[16]

> When the actor begins to work through contact, when he begins to live in relation to someone - not his stage partner but the partner

> of his own biography - when he begins to penetrate through a study of his body's impulses, the relationship of this contact, this process of exchange, there is always a rebirth in the actor.'[17]

Grotowski goes on somewhat mysteriously to claim the actor experiences two more 'rebirths', - one when he uses other actors as 'screens for his life's partner' and a third and final 'rebirth' when he discovers his 'secure partner', - a human being who 'cannot be defined' - i.e. who remains irreducibly 'other'. Even with exercises, relating to others is important:

> *Later we found that if one treats the exercises as purely physical, an emotive hypocrisy, beautiful gestures with the emotions of a fairy-dance develop. So we gave that up and began to look for personal justification in small details. By playing with colleagues, with a sense of surprise, of the unexpected - real justifications which are unexpected - how to fight, how to make unkind gestures, how to parody oneself, and so on. At that moment, the exercises took life.'*[18]

Grotowski is also aware of the limits of rationality within the context of the kind of work in which he is engaged:

> *At a certain point, traditional logic does not function...*
> *But often it's a problem of different logical systems. In life we have both formal and paradoxical logic.'*[19]

Again, he stresses lack of intentionality in the 'total act':

> *To act - that is to react - not to conduct the process but to refer it to personal experiences and to be conducted. The process must take us. At these moments one must be internally passive but externally active. The formula of resigning oneself 'not to do' is a stimulus.*[20]

Grotowski eventually decided to move beyond theatre because he found he had exhausted the possibilities of fruitful research within this framework. Jennifer Kumiega points to Laboratory Theatre's failure to connect with all audiences and advances the suggestion that some found the very intensity of the acting alienating rather than seductive. Which suggests that while the performers may have been relating very intensely to each other, this close relation may have served to make the audience feel excluded. Even in his Paratheatre phase, however, the investigation of contact between people still remained the central theme of his work. He came to envisage the 'total act', which was always 'real', never a representation, as simply living wholly in the present. One very rarely lives in the present because one is preoccupied with goals, objectives, anxieties etc.:

> *There is no being ahead of oneself, or behind oneself. One is where one is. This is only a first step, but it is the first step towards being what one really is.*[21]

The 'being ahead' and 'being behind' oneself are manifestations of the psychology of control. To abandon this is to abandon the struggle for a controlling

relationship with 'the world' and to substitute the possibility of a seductive one. There is a parallel between 'being where one is' and Baudrillard's 'annulment of the signs':

> *Only signs without referents, empty, senseless, absurd and elliptical signs absorb us.*[22]

> *Seduction lies with the annulment of the signs, of their meaning, with their pure appearance.*[23]

Grotowski's genuine advances in performance theory have, I feel, been unappreciated for two main reasons. Firstly, I believe it is necessary to disentangle the results of empirical research from his quasi-religious rhetoric of 'truth/authenticity'. Also Grotowski's status as a guru has tended to create the impression that his approach to theatre is highly personal and that his theoretical framework is therefore non-transferable. In the second place, it has tended to be assumed that Grotowski's work essentially belongs in the non-literary theatre and that all he has to offer outside that are his vocal and physical exercises. It is not immediately apparent how the work involved in producing 'Apocalypsis Cum Figuris' could have relevance to conventionally scripted drama. Apart from this a number of Grotowski's disciples, have misapplied aspects of his work: in particular, Living Theatre and Richard Schechner's 'Performance Group', in their sensational and violent attempts at engaging the audience directly, have travestied Grotwski's own intentions: he had experimented with such direct audience contact earlier in his career, but had

abandoned such gestures as being counterproductive. Jennifer Kumiega makes the point:

> *Whilst on the one hand postulating the possibility of participation in healing ritual and ceremony, there was at the same time a sense of distance being created by the treatment of their material and a degree of overt manipulation of the audience.....Within this situation it was well-nigh impossible for any authentic reaction to take place, and it was the lack of authenticity that led Grotowski to abandon this line of research.*[24]

I believe that Grotowski does provide an entree to the acting of the moment of seduction - an aspect of Barker's work which I have suggested is crucial. I mean 'acting' not merely in the sense of 'representing' but in the sense of an absorbing affective experience. I have indicated that the actor must be able to negotiate the moments of irrationality in such a way that the audience give their 'emotional consent' - emotionally the action is 'comprehensible' and 'logical' even though to 'rational' reflection it may appear wholly baffling. The Stanislavsky System with its objectives and its insistence on all action being 'logical and connected' does not provide an appropriate technical basis for approaching the seductive encounter. This is not to say that the 'control' aspects of the System are entirely useless: a lot of human behaviour appears goal-oriented and logical but clearly such characterisation does not exhaust the possibilities, nor is such behaviour usually the most dramatic or interesting - quite the opposite: it is the most predictable. In summation, then, there are a number of convergences between Grotowski's research and Seduction Theory:

1. The significance of the concept of the challenge.

2. The focussing of the affective stimulus away from the memory, the interiority of the individual, towards the interface with the Other. The consequent focussing of the actor's explorations and awareness on contact with the other rather than the notion of 'work on the self'.

3. The rejection of a supreme rationality.

4. The concept of 'aiming off'.

5. The seductive use of weakness.

6. The rejection of purely goal-oriented behaviour.

Eugenio Barba was an early student and collaborator with Grotowski; in 1979, he founded the International School of Theatre Anthropology in order to research performance on a transcultural basis. Barba's basic idea involved the isolating of the common denominators of performance at the physical level of the performer's body. Hence much of his work is devoted to what he refers to as the 'pre-expressive' level; the performer's 'expression' is determined firstly by individual personality and secondly their socio-cultural education:

> *The third is the idem which does not vary; it underlines the various individual, artistic and cultural variants.*

> *The recurrent principles at the performance's biological level makes the various performer techniques possible: they are the particular utilisation of the performer's scenic presence and dynamism.*[25]

Barba argues that the performer's body manifests sets of tensions which are quite different to the functional tensions experienced and observable in daily life:

> *These new tensions generate a different energy quality, render the body theatrically 'decided', 'alive', and manifest the performer's 'presence', or scenic **bios**, attracting the spectator's attention before any form of personal expression takes place. This is obviously a matter of a logical and not a chronological before.*[26]

This last sentence is a reminder that Barba's enterprise, more so than Grotowski's, is committed to a form of research consistent with Western academic discursive practice. The 'pre-expressive' body, which is a product of and essential to his method, Barba admits, is an abstraction, an analytical concept, - in that one only ever experiences performance as an inseparable combination of all three elements. Also the ISTA's research team includes biologists, psychologists, psycholinguists, semiologists and anthropologists; one assumes that these specialists are not involved with the intention of questioning their own disciplines but rather of using them to interrogate performance. As I have already suggested these discourses are characterised by a pervasive rationalism based on a technology of control which is per se inimical to the seductive processes. THE DICTIONARY OF THEATRE ANTHROPOLOGY focusses very much on the

physical body of the performer which becomes the 'object' of 'scientific analysis'. The text evinces that eidetic bias so fundamental to 'Reason' and is replete with numerous illustrations of physical poses. Though it contains sections on 'Balance', 'Feet', 'Hands', 'Face and Eyes', there is no section on voice and no discussion whatsoever of vocal technique. (Though in the 'Technique' section, two pages are devoted to a consideration of Helene Weigel's famous silent scream in the title role of Brecht's 'Mother Courage'!) The section which deals with performer/audience relationships is entitled 'Views' and the audience are referred to throughout as 'spectators'. This reflects a tendency amongst theatre practitioners who have rebelled against the domination of the literary text; they emphasise the visual aspects of performance and neglect not only the text but the medium whereby the text is delivered. Again, the voice, insubstantial, ephemeral, nuanced and, above all, invisible, does not lend itself to intellectual scrutiny; while the eye is consciously analytical, synthesizing visual images with the language, the ear passively absorbs the emotional charge of the voice.

Barba's approach does not concern itself with the concept of drama as interactional and gives scant consideration to the relational in general, focussing on the broad category of performance. He does, however, under the heading of 'Dilation' refer to the seductive quality of the performer:

> *There are certain performers who attract the spectator with an elementary energy which 'seduces' without mediation. This occurs*

before the spectator has either deciphered individual actions or understood their meanings.[27]

Barba cites the appeal of Oriental theatre to the Western eye as manifesting this seductive appeal most directly:

> *For an Occidental spectator watching an Oriental actor/dancer about whose culture, traditions, and scenic conventions he knows little, this experience is to be expected. Seeing a performance whose meaning he cannot fully understand and whose execution he cannot competently appreciate, he suddenly finds himself in the dark. But he must nevertheless admit that this void has a power which holds his attention, that it 'seduces' in a way which precedes intellectual understanding.*
>
> *But neither seduction nor comprehension can last for very long without one another: the seduction would be brief, the comprehension would lack interest.*[28]

Barba goes on to argue that seduction underlies any successful performance where one is fully conversant with cultural context and conventions:

> *But when the observer is faced with his 'own' theatre, all that he already knows, the questions he recognises and which tell him where or how to look for answers, create a veil which conceals the 'seduction's' elementary power.*[29]

The action of seduction, exposed in the 'alien' performance - even though it cannot be sustained as such, is concealed by our ability to 'read' the signs. It is no less effective for this. Barba insists on this separation of the intellectual and affective and does not pursue any further the relationship between the presence/absence of meaning and seduction. Seduction is a detachable *hypokeimenon*, a substrate which Barba believes is reducible to the 'non-daily' tensions in the actor's body.

Barba does, however, go on to consider some of the processes of seduction further(albeit under the heading of dilation rather than seduction) and postulates a principle of negation in the creative act which he clearly links to dialectics. In order to execute an action, one begins by doing the opposite of what one intends:

> *It is a moment which seems to negate all that is typical of a search for a result: it does not determine a new orientation but is rather a voluntary disorientation which demands that all of the researcher's energy be put in motion, that his senses be sharpened, like when one walks in the dark. The dilation of the actual potentialities costs dearly: one risks losing control of the meaning of one's own action. It is a negation which has not yet discovered the new entity which it affirms.*[40]

A number of the characteristics of seduction are outlined here - aiming off, creating energy through an opening up of possibilities, real risk, putting one's

identity into play, surrender of control. What is absent is an awareness of the essentially interactional nature of this phenomenon and in particular the interpersonal dimension which Grotowski sought to emphasise. Barba is also uneasy with any suggestion of abandoning rationality:

> *There is a preconceived notion that only that which obeys a shared logic is logical. Another aspect of this pre-conceived notion would have us believe that the personal, secret, intimate world is ruled by chance, by automatic associations, by chaos: a magma in which there are no leaps but rather inconsequent oscillation.*
>
> *What we call irrationality might be this oscillation left to the mechanical repetition of our fixations and obsessions which disappear and reappear, agitatedly, without development. But it might also be a rationality which is ours alone, a raison d'etre which does not help us to be understood but to communicate with ourselves.*[3]

In this instance, Barba seems to be standing the thing on its head. Logic is, in the final analysis, language and language is essentially interpersonal. Logic is a priori interpersonal and therefore shared. His polarisation of the individual interiority or 'soul' set over against the 'world' of milieu reveals the typical existentialist anxiety concerning the constitution of the self. Barba's concern arises because he considers the self to be the fons et origo of artistic creativity which emerges armed and accoutred from this 'personal, secret, intimate world' to confront the 'real' world of rationality. I have argued that creativity is a seductive interaction with 'the other'. Barba's citing here of a

world ruled by 'chance','automatic associations', 'chaos', 'inconsequent oscillation', 'mechanical repetition' 'without development', is the rationalist's dismissal of 'the other' which it fails or refuses to comprehend. His final suggestion of a 'personal' rationality, which allows the subject to commune with itself is reminiscent of Stanislavski's 'self-communion', an image of complacent self-absorption which demonstrates perfectly the Achilles' heel of Reason. In a way a vague air of this kind of futility haunts much academic research in theatre which bases itself in the 'ological' disciplines. Barba at least foregrounds the physical body of the performer; researchers such as Richard Schechner attempt to 'comprehend' the whole field of performance by assaulting it with the combined might of all the social 'sciences'. The irony is that the fascinating element in theatre is always the seductive which is always particular.

I should like finally in this examination of performance theory to consider briefly some of the academic contributions of which, in the last two decades, there have been a number. I mentioned Richard Schechner briefly at the end of the previous section. Although Schechner has been involved in practical theatre as a director, his approach in 'Performance Theory' is grounded for the most part in academic discourses such as anthropology, sociology and biology; he attempts to 'place' performance - a term he interprets very broadly - within these discursive formations. Manfred Pfister in his study, 'The Theory and Analysis of Drama', is every bit as ambitious in terms of making universal pronouncements as Schechner though he restricts himself to the Western literary tradition. Pfister's aims to put forward 'a detailed and sophisticated

description of its(drama's) structures and textualisation processes' and in this project he makes use of 'communication theory and structuralist ideas'. Pfister's 'theory and analysis', however, is seriously lamed by his constant deference to the 'reality' chimera and by his naive acceptance of myths of scientific advancement. In discussing the tragedies of French and German classicism, for instance, he states that their -

> *social premisses consisted in the belief in an individual that is autonomous in his or her actions and rational in his or her thought, and in a fixed and coherent philosophical system. Since the nineteenth century it has become impossible to apply these premisses to modern drama. The modern individual is regarded as a biologically and psychologically determined being, bound by social influences and constraints.*[32]

Everything Pfister asserts here is open to question and counterargument; nor are these matters peripheral or of secondary importance in any consideration of dramatic form. Later, when discussing dramatis personae, he argues in favour of using the term 'figure' for 'fictional' entities in order to distinguish them from 'real' characters. The latter, he maintains -

> *are influenced by their social context, but...on reaching maturity are able to transcend it...*[33]

Apart from the contradiction between this and the view expressed in the previous quotation, Pfister does not stop to consider precisely what a 'real'

character might amount to. If one does this, then the apparently clear-cut and obvious distinction begins to blur. Is Julius Caesar a 'real' character? Is he more 'real' than Falstaff? Was the 'stage' personality of Will Kemp 'real'? What about the public 'images' of politicians, of stars etc.? Schechner, with his generalised concept of 'performance' extending beyond the frame of traditional 'theatre' into 'real' life, avoids such problematical distinctions. Pfister continues with this theme:

> *The figures in drama appear predominantly as people who portray themselves rather than exist in their own right - that is, they generally appear in terms of the way they interact with others rather than as solitary individuals and they generally appear as speakers.*[34]

Again, the notion of existing 'in their own right' presumably as 'solitary individuals' is a highly questionable notion which postulates an ideal 'savoir absolu' but the idea of drama as essentially interactive is consonant with Szondi. Pfister, however, sees this as a regrettable limitation and points out the superiority of narrative fiction in this respect:

> *An additional contributory factor in the concentration principle is the fact that, in dramatic texts, the sociological and psychological influences on the circumstances surrounding the story cannot be treated with quite the same breadth as is possible in narrative texts. For whilst the author of a psychological novel is able to analyse the most complex structures of motivating forces and developments in the characters of its figures in the most minute*

> *detail and the author of a sociological novel can present all classes of society and the way the figures are conditioned socially by their milieux as meticulously as he or she pleases, the dramatist must be much more selective. The difference becomes clear when long narrative texts are adapted for the stage. Whilst this process may achieve gains in concrete realism, the original is usually simplified in terms of its psychological and sociological complexity.*[35]

I would agree with all that Pfister says here but, rather than see this as a deficiency in the drama, it could be considered as a positive advantage. This depth which is possible in the narrative, the epic, Pfister himself makes clear is generally organised by authoritative discourses such as, in this case, sociology or psychology and the novelist is inclined to draw upon the received ideas and ideologies of his/her time. Because the drama merely shows behaviour without authoritative/authorial explanation, interpretation is left to the audience; in this way, the dramatic presentation can be an area of freedom where received wisdom is laid open to challenge.

Both Schechner and Pfister, however, rely heavily upon structuralist methodology and their texts are replete with diagrams. Derrida has pointed out that the concept of 'structure' is basically a visual one which applies to geometrical or morphological space; yet drama and literature in general are experienced in time and to apply the idea of structure here is to use the term metaphorically - with a degree of violence. The drama does not passively render itself up to

interrogation like a visual artwork - like an object; its essence is a certain energy and, as Derrida states -

> *..the relief and design of structures appears more clearly when content, which is the living energy of meaning, is neutralized. Somewhat like the architecture of an uninhabited or deserted city, reduced to its skeleton by some catastrophe of nature or art.*[36]

A more 'subjective' response to theatre is to be found in Bernard Beckerman's 'Theatrical Presentation'[37] which demonstrates a number of convergences with the seduction theory I have advanced. Beckerman makes some use of structural analysis but, on the whole, follows a more empirical approach which takes more account of theatre as a force field than either Schechner or Pfister. Beckerman divides 'shows' into two basic categories the 'iconic' and the 'dialectical'. The former stresses being rather than becoming, is spatial rather than temporal, a ritual enactment, not a struggle, which aims at 'illumination' rather than 'catharsis'. An example of this would be the Medieval Mystery Cycles. A 'dialectical' presentation, according to Beckerman is based essentially upon the show of skill where the performer overcomes resistance, takes a risk; he puts forward the stage duel as a paradigm for this kind of performance. While the 'iconic' celebrates values, the 'dialectical' subjects them to challenge. Almost all performances contain elements of both the 'iconic' and the 'dialectical' though one or the other may be seen, perhaps, to predominate in any particular case. With Barker, this would obviously be the 'dialectical'. It is interesting

that another of Beckerman's distinctions postulates that the 'iconic' 'gives' its audience 'something' but the 'dialectical' 'gives nothing'. Barker -

> *The accusation of the cultivated philistine*
> *That the work gave them nothing*
> *WHO SAID IT MUST GIVE YOU SOMETHING*
> *It is like love you have to want*[38]

Beckerman:

> *It is not an amorphous nothing. It is not absence. Rather, the nothing that is so central to theatrical show is a carefully defined nothing. a nothing that captures us, into which we pour our feelings. It is the nothing that lies between Richard III's affability with his princely nephews and our knowledge of his intentions, between the announcement of a high flyer's triple somersault and the moment he attempts it, between a villain's threat and his assault....It is a nothing compressed by sharply marked boundaries so that the space between is not dead space but resounds with contradictions and ridiculousness. It is a nothing which serves as a screen onto which we project our expectations and emotions.*[39]

Beckerman follows through this line of thinking drama in terms of tensions and ambiguities. Beginning with the actor in role, contrary to the Stanislavskian conception of 'becoming the part', I advanced the idea that the ambiguity

existing between actor and role was important in seducing the audience. Beckerman makes the same point point:

> *The actor is himself and simultaneously 'another'.....the theatrical significance of his appearance lies in the audience's simultaneous awareness of his twofold identity.*[40]

As an example of theatre where the literary text makes explicit play with this point, Beckerman cites Shakespeare's epilogue to AS YOU LIKE IT where the boy actor who would have performed Rosalind deliberately plays upon this transsexual casting. A similar instance is apparent in Prospero's epilogue to THE TEMPEST where the character merges ambiguously with the actor functioning as spokesman for the company. The individual performer confronting the 'other' of the audience, however, allows for limited possibilities. As Beckerman says:

> *The performer may charm, may seduce, may confide, but ambivalence cannot be taken very far. For that a partner is needed, and since the audience cannot be an effective partner, someone else must be found: the second actor, the subject of the next chapter.*[41]

He then proceeds to develop what is, perhaps, his main thesis which is that the essential dramatic encounter is the 'duet' - one actor confronting another. Even scenes involving a number of characters, he sees as being reducible to a series of duets, citing the Greek custom of only using three actors who would play a number of προσωπα(personae) as necessary:

> *..my contention has been that the duet....is the key unit of dramatic presentation. The motive behind framing action in this binary fashion is not literary but theatrical.*[42]

Beckerman explains this observation by suggesting that the duet provides a way of enabling dramatic energies to be clearly channelled but I would also suggest that the duet is appropriate in view of the duel/dual nature of the seductive encounter which I emphasised in my chapter on the processes of seduction; it is the duel which, generating its own momentum, detaches the protagonists from their grounding in their respective 'realities' and the world of the law. Beckerman also emphasises the significance of persuasion in these duets:

> *...one person working to gain something from another without full power to secure it is fundamental to drama. Outright use of force has great but limited attraction onstage. It makes for an excellent finale but cannot sustain a narrative.*[43]

He specifically refers to 'seduction' as one of the 'subdivisions' of persuasion duets but his use of the term appears to be limited to the sexual and persuasion of any kind can clearly fall into the broader description of seduction which I have advanced. One of Beckerman's persistent points, which follows from his notion of the 'dialectical' theatre as grounded in the show of skill, is that the performer overcomes some kind of 'resistance'. That the principal element in this is seduction is made clear by the examples he cites. For instance:

> *A striking example of performer's work on audience resistance involves the medicine show. In 1977 at a conference sponsored by the American Society for Theatre Research, the daughter of an old-line medicine showman gave a demonstration of her father's patter. Among the sophisticated auditors, there was widespread skepticism and condescension. After all, we knew that the medicine show was rather shady, able to make easy marks of the bumpkins to which it played, but too obvious for the rest of us. Yet as the daughter went through the routine, something happened. The art with which that routine was assembled made it totally convincing. We in the audience could sense our resistance melting away. Clearly, if she had had a bottle of patent medicine, most of us would have been ready to buy it.*[44]

There is the irrational - 'something happened' - but also the process of reversal which I have indicated is characteristic of seduction: scepticism is transmuted into credulity. It is almost as if the sheer weight of resistance is somehow turned and made to tell against itself. There is too the impulsive abandonment of 'reality', the world of common sense and received wisdom.

Though he remarks on the historical precedence and qualitative distinctiveness of 'duologues' - as opposed to 'polylogues', Pfister does not develop the point. Like Beckerman, however, he emphasises the importance of dialogues of persuasion:

It is therefore not surprising that a predominant appellative function is particularly common in dramatic speech and that dialogues in which one partner attempts to persuade or win over the other have been virtually obligatory components of plays over long periods in the history of drama.

Dialogues with a predominantly appellative function are often used to mark dramatic climaxes with a high level of suspense.[45]

IRRATIONAL THEATRE

The Challenge Posed by the Plays of

Howard Barker for Contemporary Performance

Theory and Practice

Three Volumes

Volume 3: Analyses of Plays

By Charles Lamb

For the Degree of PhD

Joint School of Theatre Studies

University of Warwick

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SECTION THREE: ANALYSES OF PLAYS

CHAPTER TEN: 'Judith' — A Seduction

I should like finally to consider in detail two plays by Barker in the light of the Seduction theory I have advanced in this study. JUDITH, published in 1990, is based on the apocryphal story of the eponymous Jewish heroine who conveyed herself secretly to the tent of Holofernes, her country's oppressor, seduced and then murdered him, taking away as trophy the decapitated head of her victim. Besides the two central protagonists, Barker includes another woman who accompanies Judith referred to in the dramatis personae as 'the Servant'; this is the role this character is initially given by Judith when the two women arrive at Holofernes' tent but Barker also describes her as 'An Ideologist' - something which becomes more apparent later in the play. In THE POSSIBILITIES,[1] Barker dealt with the aftermath of this episode in a play entitled THE UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCES OF A PATRIOTIC ACT where Judith, having lost the power of speech, has retired to the country to give birth to the murdered Holofernes' child. When a representative of the state comes to urge her back into public life, Judith describes her action as 'a crime' because murderer and victim had desired each other. When the representative extends her hand to Judith to reassure her, the latter cuts it off with the words:

> *I cut the loving gesture! I hack the trusted gesture! I betray! I betray!*[2]

Barker is focussing again upon the point where personal morality, the intuitive sense of the ethical, is violated in the interests of the political. Where the face to face with the other(THAT GOOD BETWEEN US), in which Levinas locates the foundation of the ethical, is savagely betrayed.

JUDITH begins with Holofernes alone in his tent. As emerges in subsequent dialogue, he has completed his plan of battle; with this and his own charismatic presence in the ranks, he is complacent that he will defeat Israel, as he has done before, and put the entire nation to the sword and slavery: the conclusion is foregone. The moment of the play, then, lies in a strange hiatus between action and event - all the more strange because the event is a slaughter. This is the familiar Barker territory of the catastrophic - a twilight zone where the 'real', regulated world of social ties and obligations fades and desire is free to express itself.

Holofernes begins with what appears to be a soliloquy reflecting on death. The status of the speech - as soliloquy - is undermined when the General interjects an order to others outside his tent to enter. This introduces immediately an area of ambiguity for the audience: Holofernes appears to be 'performing' to them - yet this may not be the case. This is a device Barker uses in other dramas to play upon the ambiguities of the performer/role split. (There is a simliar situation in THE EUROPEANS, Act I Scene 3, which begins with what appears to be a soliloquy from Katrin but auditors emerge from the darkness.) In spite of seeming to be absorbed in his own thoughts, Holofernes is acutely

aware - more so than the audience - of what goes on round about him. His words indicate a considerable level of intellectual sophistication:

> *For while victory is the object of the battle, death is its subject, and the melancholy of the soldiers is the peculiar silence of a profound love.*[3]

Holofernes presents himself as being aware of of his own seduction here; victory is the rational justification for battle, its object, but it is not why he desires battle. As I suggested, in seduction, the end is seen as a means to a means. This same melancholy love is celebrated in the works of the Great War poets, the rational, socialised object of whose poems is, in complete contradiction, the condemnation of war. The fact that his self-analysis is not befogged by humanistic ideology is clear when he talks of his 'cruelty'.

> *But cruelty is collaboration in chaos, of which the soldiers are merely the agents.*[4]

His words show a keen awareness of his posture as challenging conventional morality which he mocks:

> *Because I walk among the dead they will ascribe to me feelings of shame or compassion. This is not the case. Rather, I am overcome with wonder. I am trembling with a terrible infatuation....*

And some generals talk of necessity. They talk of limited objectives. There are no limitations, nor is there necessity. There is only infatuation.[5]

When the two women enter, they kneel silently; Judith uncorks a bottle. Holofernes remarks disparagingly that he does not drink and there is a long pause. When the servant appears to offer Judith to the general, her register, in contrast to his, is colloquial, commonplace and obviously ingratiating:

I heard - futile now, I see - I heard - you liked women.[6]

Holofernes announces that he wishes only to talk of death. The servant's response - that Judith is similarly pre-occupied with mortality - appears an ingratiating lie and her persistence prompts Holofernes to seize and choke her her. Up to this point, Judith has remained silent - leading Holofernes to dismiss her as 'shallow', 'a bitch', 'a thing that giggles'. She lacks any quality of 'otherness' - a vacuous sexual object which has been proffered many times before, the same. He focusses upon the servant as being responsible for their intrusion. When Judith utters her first line -

You are killing my property.[7]

he is startled and engaged. He realises that he has been mistaken concerning the relative status of the women, that he is, in Judith's eyes, dignifying a mere object, a slave, with an interest which should be beneath him.

He is also intrigued at the manner of her intervention - not humanitarian - which suggests that she is as 'cruel' as himself. This latter aspect may have been a successful bluff on her part. Her objection to his behaviour is, anyway, a challenge to his authority to do as he pleases - and she herself begins to take on the status of a challenge. After a pause, he attempts to reassert his status with the put-down:

> *I do not wish to fuck tonight*[8]

A little later, he makes the admission:

> *I do like women, but for all the wrong reasons. And as for them they rapidly see through me. They see I only hide in them, which is not love. They see I shelter in their flesh. Which is not love. Now, go away.*[9]

As is made clear later, nothing that any of the parties to this dialogue says may be taken entirely at face value. What, like this, may appear to be an admission of weakness, can in fact be a tactic to enlist sympathy or a challenge.

A pause is broken by the cry of a sentry and Holofernes commences the next section of dialogue by suddenly appearing to question his whole career:

> *HOLOFERNES: It is of great importance that the enemy is defeated.*

JUDITH: Oh, yes!

HOLOFERNES: Or is it? Perhaps it only seems so.

JUDITH: Seems so?

HOLOFERNES: Always the night before the soldiers die I think - perhaps this is not important after all. Perhaps it would be better if the enemy defeated us. I mean, from a universal point of view. Perhaps my own view is too narrow.

JUDITH: (Thoughtfully) Yes...'[10]

This, in itself, is a very seductive gesture because of its very openness; it seems to invite participation on an equal level. Judith's very measured and cautious response, leads on to Holofernes dismissing serious consideration of the idea and escalating the duel by rapping out another challenge -

Take your clothes off now.''

He interjects this order almost as an aside in the middle of a speech. I do not think this is so much a calculated tactic as a drop onto a different level of consciousness. He makes clear some lines later exactly what her attraction is:

I long to be married, but to a cruel woman. And as I lay dying of sickness in a room, I would want her to ignore me. I would want her

to laugh in the kitchen with a lover as my mouth grew dry. I would want her to count my money as I choked.'[7]

This seems to represent a denial/refusal of any possiblity of love and one would think that the invitation he seems to give here would be quite satisfactory for Judith's purpose - a purpose well-known to the audience. She finds, however, in spite of a massive effort of will that she is unable to comply with his instruction. In her confusion, she turns on and attempts to dismiss the servant whom Holofernes, now triumphant, detains probably to increase Judith's embarrassment.

There is another pause, after which, Holofernes sums up; he seems to interpret her confusion as meaning that she came not merely with the idea of fornication, but of loving him.

I am a man who never could be loved. I am a man no woman could find pitiful. Pity is love. Pity is passion. The rest is clamour. The rest is just imperative.....

When a woman loves a man, it is not his manliness she loves, however much she craves it. It is the pity he enables her to feel, by showing, through the slightest aperture, his loneliness. No matter what his brass, no matter what his savage, it creeps, like blood under a door..'[8]

This again could be perceived as a kind of challenge. If one is seduced by weakness and vulnerability, then the apparent humiliation he forces on Judith can rebound upon the perpetrator: Holofernes puts himself in danger of pitying her. There is a reversal and weakness becomes strength. Perhaps Holofernes realises this and when Judith expresses the desire to dress, he escalates the encounter by removing some of his clothes - exposing himself. Judith's request for confirmation of his bloody intentions for the following day is perhaps an attempt to confirm her own murderous purpose. Her increasing impatience with the servant's interventions shows that she resents this third party view of the duel. She confesses her own unhappiness to him and there is an important silence:

> *(Long pause. They look at one another.)*
>
> *HOLOFERNES: I can't be loved.*'[14]

The reiteration of this point suggests again that the possibility or the hope is very much in his mind. Something flows between them in the look.

Holofernes returns to philosophising by contending that the sole purpose of existence is reproduction, that this is absurd, and in view of this, his career as a military butcher is no less moral than any other. Judith suggests an alternative:

> *Yes, but if life is so very - is so utterly - fatuous, should we not comfort one another? Or is that silly?*'[15]

At this point the servant, obviously feeling that things are drifting the wrong way, intervenes to cut short this almost tender melancholy and, indirectly, to bring Judith back to her original objective:

> *Tomorrow you'll be different! You'll have done the killing of a lifetime! Tomorrow you won't know yourself! 'Did I go on about death?' 'Was I miserable?' **Off with yer skirt, darling!**'*[16]

Judith responds to this:

> *JUDITH: All right, let's fuck.'*[17]

She tries to dismiss the emotional validity of their previous intensity, to undercut the enchantment of seduction:

> *You want me to say how much I, how magnificently you, all right, I will do, I'm far from educated, so I'll stop pretending, and anyway, nothing you say is original, either. Do I insult you? Do I abolish your performance? It needs abolishing. (Pause. The servant turns away in despair. HOLOFERNES stares at her, without emotion. The pressure in JUDITH dissipates. She shrugs.) I am reckoned to be the most beautiful woman in the district. So I thought I had a chance. (She goes to pick her clothing off the floor. She stops and lets out a scream. The scream ceases. She remains still.)'*[18]

Judith tries to force an objective view on their encounter - not only of Holofernes who is not 'original', but also of herself - 'reckoned to be the most beautiful woman'. The servant clearly thinks Judith has gone too far in insulting Holofernes but the latter controls any impulse of anger he feels and allows her to exhaust her tension. When he resumes, he does so from where he left off with a challenging admission:

> *HOLOFERNES: And yet I want to be. (Pause) I, the impossible to love, require love. Often, I am made aware of this. (Pause)*[19]

When the servant, seeing an opportunity of salvaging the situation, encourages him to continue with this, he silences her:

> *HOLOFERNES:* ***Do you think I can't see you?*** *(The SERVANT is transfixed.)* ***Your mask. Your fog. Do you think I can't see you?*** *(Pause)*[20]

The moment is highly ambiguous. What does Holofernes mean? The Servant is 'transfixed' presumably at the possibility that Holofernes 'sees through her' - i.e. knows why she is pandering to him. Is he bluffing? or is he merely objecting to her patently false interest in him? What he says immediately after this, although it appears to be - and may actually be - generalisation, takes on a very particular significance: he is referring initially to his need to be loved:

> *The way in which it asserts itself is as follows. Frequently I expose myself to the greatest danger. I court my own extinction. Whilst I am exhilarated by the conflict I am also possessed of the most perfect*

lucidity. So absolute am I in consciousness, yet also so removed from any fear of death, I am at these moments probably a god.[21]

Is Holofernes suggesting that he knows the women have come to kill him, that in his godlike 'lucidity' he has perceived their intention, that he is deliberately courting death? Whatever may be the case on his part, his words must surely make this impression, however fleeting, on the women? When the women arrived, they came concealing a secret; Holofernes sensed this and he is now attempting to turn the seductive power of their secret against them, while maintaining his enigma for them. To return to Baudrillard:

..I know the other's secret but do not reveal it, and he knows I know it but does not let it be acknowledged: the intensity between the two is simply the secret of the secret.....Only at the cost of remaining unspoken does it maintain its power, just as seduction functions from never being spoken or desired..[22]

Holofernes, however, goes on to say that after the ecstasy of courting death, he is haunted by the need to know that if he had indeed died some other person would have died of grief for him:

I am not the definition of another's life. That is my absent trophy. I think we live only in the howl of others. The howl is love.(Pause)[23]

This is the reverse of the desire he expressed earlier for a 'cruel woman'.

The Servant, again trying to use the opportunity to put matters back on course, gives Holofernes a 'lecture' to the effect that 'strong' men must show a woman a little weakness - as a kind of concession to their inferior dignity. In response to this Holofernes shows a complete collapse - he bursts into tears and clasps the Servant. The tears may be 'real' but it would seem likely, especially in the light of what has just been said, that Holofernes is deploying them tactically. In fact the violence and immediacy of his response suggest he may be mocking the Servant - particularly as the stage directions state that he should release her just as abruptly as he he seized her. The effect of this could be quite comic though there should be no overt hint of a comic intention on Holofernes' part. He then proceeds to tell them what a weak and cowardly child he was:

> ***There was none weaker than me.***[24]

His confession of abject weakness leads on to a description of how he learned to compensate for this:

> *But being weak I discovered cunning. I learned to say one thing, knowing it would satisfy the expectation, whilst carrying on a second and more secret conversation with myself. I led people away from my true intention, my speech became a maze, I used speech to trap my enemies, my speech was a pit, I lived in speech, making it a weapon.*[25]

Judith, however, draws the immediately relevant conclusion from all this:

> *You mean, nothing you say is true? (He looks at her.) I don't mind that. I am perfectly able to lie myself. **I am almost certainly lying now in fact.***[265]

Surprisingly, perhaps, Judith says she finds this a great relief:

> *Excellent! Forgive my hysteria, it was the pressure, the sheer suffocating pressure of sincerity. And now I am light! I am ventilated! A clean dry wind whirls through my brain! I intend to kill you, how is that for a lie? And that must mean I love you! Or doesn't it! Anything is possible! I think now we have abandoned the search for truth, really, we can love each other!*[267]

Judith's exhilaration is owing to a number of factors: a) she is courting death in the manner Holofernes claimed he did ('I intend to kill you')- perfectly lucid and 'godlike'; b) she has freed herself of the burden of her original intention - her duty, (she may or may not kill Holofernes);c) she is energised by the opening up of possibilities ('Anything is possible') which is characteristic of seduction.

> *The relief of knowing you are simply an element in a fiction! I think before this moment I never was equipped to love.*[268]

Judith has put her own identity into play - Jewess, widow, mother of about-to-be-massacred children - the magnitude of the stakes in this seductive game adds

to its intensity. As I indicated in the relevant chapter, seduction relieves one of all obligations one is under in respect of the Law. In his earlier treatment of this subject in THE UNFORSEEN CONSEQUENCES OF A POLITICAL ACT(one of THE POSSIBILITIES), Judith says of this moment:

> *I could not have cared if he dripped with my father's blood, or had my babies' brains around his boot, or waded through all Israel.*[29]

The moment of seduction detaches the individual from both personal and political history.

Interestingly, it is not Holofernes' confession of social inadequacy that engages her (if love is pity) but his admission that he lies:

> *When you told me you could not help yourself lying I fell in love with you. That was the moment.*[30]

She ends by encouraging Holofernes to continue lying. The point is, however, not merely to lie - which would be to tell the truth by saying the opposite - but to preserve the dangerous tension of ambiguity:

> *JUDITH: .....Lie, do lie! (Pause)*
>
> *HOLOFERNES: I know why you're here. (Pause. The SERVANT stares.)*

JUDITH: I know why I came.

HOLOFERNES: I know what you intend.

JUDITH: I know what I intended.

HOLOFERNES: I know it all.

JUDITH: I knew it all. (Pause) I knew it all. And now I know nothing.

(He looks into her.)

HOLOFERNES: We love, then.

JUDITH: Yes.

HOLOFERNES: And I, who is unlovable, I am loved.

JUDITH: My dear, yes....(Pause)[31]

Judith's immediate response to Holofernes' challenge is quite inspired. While preserving the secret as secret, she acknowledges his challenge in the most direct way but implies that, although she may have come with a particular intention, Holofernes has caused her to abandon it - very flattering to his sense of himself as godlike. Their professions of love are particularly interesting with regard to the 'lying' pact. Baudrillard states:

Only signs without referents, empty, senseless, absurd, and elliptical signs absorb us.[212]

And:

Seduction lies with the annulment of the signs, of their meaning, with their pure appearance.[213]

Both parties here have agreed that what they say is strictly 'meaningless' - which serves to intensify their duel. So when Holofernes says 'We love, then' and Judith affirms it, the words are not a communication, - they are the thing itself, pure presence.

While they embrace, the Servant intervenes - almost like a chorus. She presents the perspective of 'reality', the world of truth, concerned not with processes but ends, not with the magic of superficial appearances but interpretation:

One of them is lying. Or both of them. This baffles me, because whilst Judith is clever, so is he.....

How brilliant she is! How ecstatic she is! She convinces me! But she must be careful, for with lying, sometimes, the idea, though faked, can discover an appeal, and then we're fucked![214]

In the charmed world of seduction, language ceases to be instrumental: we can be seduced by our own words.

When Holofernes appears to be asleep in Judith's arms, the 'servant' changes:

> *SERVANT: (abandoning her persona) Judith....*[356]

From this point on, she drops her role of procuress or servant and addresses Judith as an equal. Realising that Judith has been seduced, she puts as much pressure on her as she can to carry out the murder:

> *SERVANT: Israel commands you. Israel which birthed you. Which nourished you. Israel insists. And your child sleeps. Her last sleep if-*
>
> *JUDITH: I am well drilled. (She glares at the SERVANT. The SENTRY cries. Pause. Judith goes to the sword.)*
>
> *SERVANT: Excellent. (She unsheaths it.)*
> *Excellent.*
> *My masterful.*
> *My supreme in.*
> *My most terrible.*
> *My half-divine. (JUDITH raises the weapon over Holofernes)*

HOLOFERNES: (without moving) I'm not asleep. I'm only pretending.

(Pause. The sword stays.)

My dear.

My loved one.

I'm not asleep. I'm only pretending.(Pause. JUDITH closes her eyes.)[xvi]

It becomes clear here why Barker added the description of 'ideologist' to the Servant in the dramatis personae. The echoing of the servant's formal, ritual invocations by Holofernes serves to underline the conflict here between power on the one hand ('My masterful', 'My terrible') and desire on the other ('My dear'etc.)The surprise, however, is Holofernes' final seductive gesture: he puts his life absolutely in Judith's hands: he has reversed their situations:

HOLOFERNES: I can win battles. The winning of battles is, if anything, facile to me, but.

JUDITH: My arm aches!

HOLOFERNES: But you.

JUDITH: Aches!

HOLOFERNES: Love.

JUDITH: My arm aches and I lied!

HOLOFERNES: Of course you lied, and I lied also.

JUDITH: We both lied, so -

HOLOFERNES: But in the lies we. Through the lies we. Underneath the lies we.

*SERVANT: **Oh, the barbaric and inferior vile inhuman bestial and bloodsoaked monster of depravity!***[37]

It is interesting that Barker writes Holofernes' last speech here with a single full stop at the end of each sentence rather than a short line of dots which would have indicated an intention to complete the sentence. These sentences are complete because Holofernes is alluding to an unspoken pact which must not be uttered but which is pointed at in 'we'. His words, coupled with the gesture of complete vulnerability, paralyse Judith. She repeats the Servant's slogan but cannot act:

*JUDITH: **Oh, the barbaric and inferior** - (Seeing JUDITH is stuck between slogan and action, the SERVANT swiftly resorts to a stratagem, and leaning over Holofernes, enrages JUDITH with a lie.)*
SERVANT: He is smiling! He is smiling! (With a cry, JUDITH brings down the sword.)[38]

The notion that Holofernes is grinning in confident anticipation of another easy victory is enough momentarily to abolish his performance in Judith's eyes; the

very intensity of their pact is turned against itself and she has ample power to kill him.

The Servant rushes to complete the job of removing Holofernes' head; she is practical and businesslike but Judith is stunned. Her speech indicates two violently dislocated levels:

> *A right bitch cunt, I was, nearly ballocked it, eh,, nearly - (She staggers.)* ***Oh, my darling how I*** *- (She recovers.) Nearly poxed the job, the silly fucker I can be sometimes, a daft bitch and a cunt brained fuck arse - (She staggers.)* ***Oh, my - Oh, my -*** [39]

This parallels the levels of mind and brute body into which the servant has hacked Holofernes. A constant theme in Barker's work is the struggle between the state and the individual for possession of the individual's agony, their suffering. In this case, the Servant's seizure of the head forms part of this expropriation:

> *We take the head because the head rewards the people. The people are entitled symbolically to show contempt for their oppressor. Obviously the spectacle has barbaric undertones but we. The concentration of emotion in the single object we etcetera. So.*[40]

Barker here is clearly satirising the double standards of the state 'ideologist' - condemning but endorsing 'barbarism' for its own purposes.

Judith, focusses upon the headless body and announces her intention of making love to it. I have already indicated that, in the world of seduction, death does not end the engagement; in fact, THE LAST SUPPER shows how it can be used to prolong it indefinitely. The Servant is utterly horrified and protests:

SERVANT: It demeans your triumph and humiliates our -

JUDITH: How can he be an enemy? His head is off.

*SERVANT: **Enemy. Vile enemy.***

JUDITH: You keep saying that....! But now the head is gone I can make him mine, surely? The evil's gone, the evil's in the bag and I can love! Look, I claim him! Lover, lover, respond to my adoring glance, it's not too late, is it? We could have a child, we could, come, come, adored one, it is only politics kept us apart!

SERVANT: I think I am going to be sick...

JUDITH: No, no, count to a hundred...

SERVANT: I will be made insane by this!

JUDITH: You weren't insane before. Is it love makes you insane? Hatred you deal admirably with. Come, loved one...! (She lies over Holofernes's body. The SERVANT is transfixed with horror.)[11]

Judith's comment here is significant: we are presented with two contrasted atrocities - first the killing and severing of the head, then the attempted necrophilia. The first is applauded by the state as an act of heroism, the second abhorred - not least because this behaviour is hardly consistent with a heroine - which is what the state will now require Judith to be.

After the failure of Judith's attempt to love Holofernes, she is physically unable to move. This hysterical paralysis reflects her own mental state - she cannot adjust to what has happened. Dramatically this is convenient because it poses the problem in a very acute way; they have to escape, but the Servant will have to persuade Judith to come to terms with her action before they can do this. First she says she will find Judith a husband and prophecies a vision of idyllic marital bliss and contentment. This is probably totally counterproductive: in the light of what has just taken place, such a dream can never attain any degree of reality for Judith. Thereafter, when Judith says that she wants to go but cannot, the Servant asserts that she is being punished by God for trying to make love to Holofernes. Judith asks the Servant to pray for her - she does but to no avail. As the Servant is leaving, Judith gives 'a profound cry of despair' which causes her companion to stop. The Servant suddenly has an idea:

> *I say god. I mean Judith. (Pause) I say Him. But I mean you. (Pause. The cry of the SENTRY is heard. The SERVANT places the head on the ground, and comes back to JUDITH. She kneels before her, and leaning*

on her knuckles, puts her forehead to the ground. Pause. JUDITH watches.)

JUDITH: You are worshipping me.[43]

It is no doubt the extremity of the moment which lends the Servant the persuasive power of her next speech which articulates a number of recurring Barker themes and deserves to be quoted in full:

SERVANT: Firstly, remember we create ourselves. We do not come made. If we came made, how facile life would be, worm-like, crustacean, invertebrate. Facile and futile. Neither love nor murder would be possible. Secondly, whilst shame was given us to balance will, shame is not a wall. It is not a wall, Judith, but a sheet rather, threadbare and stained. It only appears a wall to those who won't come near it. Come near it and you see how thin it is, you could part it with your fingers. Thirdly, it is a facility of the common human, to recognise no act is reprehensible but only the circumstances make it so, for the reprehensible attaches to the unnecessary, but with the necessary, the same act bears the nature of obligation, honour and esteem. These are the mysteries which govern the weak, but in the strong are staircases to the stars. I kneel to you. I kneel to the Judith who parts the threadbare fabric with her will. Get up, now. (Pause. JUDITH cannot move. The SERVANT counts the seconds. She perseveres.) Judith, who are those we worship? What is it they

possess? The ones we wrap in glass and queue half-fainting for a glimpse? The ones whose works are quoted and endorsed? The little red books and the little green books, Judith, who are they? Never the kind, for the kind are terrorized by grief. Get up now, Judith. (Nothing happens. Pause) No, they are the specially human who drained the act of meaning and filled it again from sources fresher and - (JUDITH climbs swiftly to her feet.)[43]

The entire argument, from the Servant's point of view, is pure hypothesis; as she herself said earlier:

...you can know a thing and still not know it.[44]

Her words, however, are sufficient to transform Judith from a state of complete and abject powerlessness to one of godlike dominance. Again, this demonstrates the action of the reversal process in seduction: by refusing the overwhelming burden of grief and shame, these negative emotions become instead a positive glorying in her action. She must escalate the stakes. Judith experiences again the sense of liberation she experienced when she felt free to lie to Holofernes: she will use the murder to create a powerful new self. She has taken over the absolute character Holofernes displayed at the beginning of the play. The first person she tests her shamelessness on, ironically, is the Servant whom she humiliates by treating like a slave:

JUDITH: ***Who said you could get up.*** *(The SERVANT stops.) And any version that I tell, endorse it. For that'll be the truth.*[45]

She abolishes any kind of truth apart from that which she herself creates; her word is all the reality there is. It is only by escalating the game in this way that Judith can be re-energised through the opening of new possibilities:

> *I shall be unbearable, intolerably vile, inflicting my opinions on the young, I shall be the bane of Israel, spouting, spewing, a nine-foot tongue of ignorance will slobber out of my mouth and drench the populace with the saliva of my prejudice, they will wade through my opinions, they will wring my accents out of their clothes, but they will tolerate it, for am I not their mother?*[46]

Barker has been criticised for a writing which, as fantasy, has no purchase on the 'real' world, yet I have no difficulty in recognising the 'power-crazed' mentality Judith demonstrates here. While humiliating the Servant by forcing her to cut her hair off, Judith reflects on testing further her superhuman status:

> *To kill your enemies, how easy that is. To murder the offending, how oddly stale. Real ecstasy must come of liquidating innocence, to punish in the absence of offence...*[47]

Because of her role as ideologist, Judith particularly despises the Servant, who is temporarily discomforted with her companion's new-found character but on the whole approves:

> *...for you nothing is really pain at all.*
>
> *Not torture. Death. Or.*

Nothing is.

It's drained, and mulched, and used to nourish further hate, as dead men's skulls are ground for feeding fields...[44]

Sewage disposal is a persistent Barker metaphor for the ideological/political scene; because pain and suffering is continually justified, expropriated, used by political ideology, it is also, in consequence, not experienced fully by the individual. Although the Servant thinks that Judith has been safely secured for the state - which will tolerate her tyranny and corruption - Judith's last words before she leaves the stage :

Israel

Is

My

Body![45]

suggest another reversal. Israel claims Judith, but she claims Israel.

If one were to consider this play from the Stanislavskian point of view of a structure of consistent objectives, it is clear that this could be appropriate only for the Servant, the ideologist, who maintains the superobjective of killing Holofernes and maximising the political capital therefrom throughout the piece. In a way, this is an important part of her function - to offset the seductive relation between the other two. It could be objected that I have advanced an

interpretation of the play, a practice which I have, on the whole, tended to condemn. I would argue that, given a text, it is the job of those staging it to take the written lines and turn them into actions - mainly speech-acts; in considering Barker's text I have been concerned to describe what is **happening**. My approach has been ontological and subjective, not ideological and objective. I believe that the 'thought' expressed in the text of JUDITH (as well as in Barker's other writings) points strongly to the kind of focus which I have attempted to outline in this study. Focus, I would suggest, is an appropriate word. Nor would I claim all the actions I have suggested were necessarily correct; I have no doubt were I to work on the play with actors, I would have a different view by the end of the rehearsal period, different possibilities would emerge: the important thing is to have a starting point.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: 'The Castle'

Perhaps the most highly acclaimed of Barker's plays to date has been THE CASTLE which was first performed as part of the 'Barker season' in the RSC Pit at the Barbican in 1985. At that time, the drama was widely perceived as being principally concerned with the Reaganite intensification of the arms race and with 'Greenham Common' style feminist oppositional values; this connection, while not without substance, does not dominate the play and certainly does not sanction the extrapolation of simple political or social 'messages'. The text comprises one of the richest and most densely written of Barker's entire oeuvre, providing an intellectual canvas surpassing in its breadth while simultaneously depending upon a symbolic weave of astonishing economy and tight integration. In this final chapter, I wish to examine this major work in in some depth, an exercise which will entail a consideration of literary/symbolic elements as well dramatic considerations since both are relevant to the theoretical concepts of seduction I have advanced.

The plot is relatively straightforward. An English knight, Stucley, returns home to his domain after years spent fighting in the Crusades. His followers have been killed or fallen by the wayside; only a single retainer the appropriately named Batter and a captive Arab engineer, Krak, accompany him. However, while he

has been away, the women have evolved a different lifestyle which is feminist, collective and non-exploitative of human or natural powers. Further, Stucley's wife is involved in this on the level of a personal as well as political commitment insofar as she is the lesbian lover of Skinner, a ploughman's widow, whose feminism is both militant and profoundly ideological. Stucley is disgusted by what appears to him to be the rank negligence of his estate but his chief concern is to find Ann and to resume a relationship which infatuates him and which he has carried like a grail in his heart through all his military travails. She informs him that she has been unfaithful and that he should leave. In a blind fury, he sets about 'restoring order' and implements the construction of a massive castle designed by Krak. The latter, hating his captors, an alien cut off from any positive emotional ties with the land in which he is held, intends the castle as an engine of destruction aimed as much at its possessors as their potential foes. Stucley also reestablishes his lapsed priest, Nailer, as bishop of his own unique sect of Christianity - the church of Christ the Lover. Against this array of male power - spiritual and temporal, the opposition of the women can do little. Skinner, the most resolutely opposed to the castle, realising that Ann's love for her is ebbing away, in desperation seduces and murders the builder - Holiday. She is tortured in the dungeons of the castle, tried for the murder and sentenced by Stucley to be turned loose with the rotting corpse of her victim chained to her. As Stucley becomes increasingly paranoid ordering more and more fortifications and corresponding increments in his police state, Ann seduces Krak whose awakened emotions introduce confusion into his hitherto singleminded devotion to the castle. Ann, pregnant with his child, pleads with Krak to run away: he tells her that there is nowhere to go - the castle is inescapable. She kills herself along with her unborn infant and her action is

followed by an epidemic of suicides amongst pregnant women who throw themselves off the castle walls. The griefstricken and by now quite mad Stucley is given the coup de grace by his bailiff, Batter, who in consultation with Nailer asks Skinner to become head of a feminist-type earth-mother religion. Skinner, transformed by her sufferings, has remained at the castle and has become the focus of a secret and quasi-religious popular veneration. When she refuses to prop up Batter's state, he offers power directly to her. In a surge of desire she promises vengeance on all who have made her suffer but almost immediately realises that she will be 'too cruel' and declines the offer. Krak steps out of the shadow of the castle wall and insists she accepts: the play ends with Skinner struggling to recall a time when 'there was no government' as jets streak overhead.

Considered from the perspective of the basic interrelations of the characters, a clear pattern emerges which focusses on Ann who seduces or has seduced the other main roles. She is worshipped by her husband, Stucley, whose subsequent degeneration can be seen as a consequence of her rejection. If anything, she is even more essential to Skinner's moral universe:

> *SKINNER:...They talk of a love-life, don't they? Do you know the phrase 'love-life', as if somehow this thing ran under or beside, as if you stepped from one life to the other, banality to love, love to banality, no, love is in the cooking and the washing and the milking, no matter what, the colour of the love stains everything, I say so*

anyway, being admittedly of a most peculiar disposition I WOULD RATHER YOU WERE DEAD THAN TOOK A STEP OR SHUFFLE BACK FROM ME....'

Skinner herself makes clear later in the action that she is shattered not by the return of male power or even by her torture but by the loss of Ann's love. After Skinner, Ann seduces Krak, similarly rocking his cosmos to its very foundations. Her suicide precedes the final catastrophe - the mass suicides of the pregnant women, Stucley's assassination and the offer of power to Skinner. All three of her 'victims' commit themselves to various 'truths' - they resist. Ann steadfastly refuses to sacrifice any of her instinctive desires in the interests of ideology or even of sparing others pain. Her power to seduce others lies in her own openness to seduction.

Stucley is, as I have indicated committed to truths: he has been engaged in an ideological conflict, the Crusade, and his agonisings over religious matters show that his theological concern is not mere hypocrisy:

I found the church bunged up with cow and bird dung, the place we married in, really, what - (pause) So I prayed in the nettles.[16]

His 'faith' has been reinforced insofar as he has suffered for it. Returning home to his wife, he extends his religious feeling to her:

... I have seen your face on tent roofs...[17]

I was saying to the Arab every hundred yards I have this little paradise...'[13]

...I who jumped in every pond of murder kept this one thing pure in my head, pictured you half-naked on an English night...'[14]

This kind of exaggerated veneration of woman, within the predominantly medieval context of the play, strongly accords with the chivalric 'courtly love' phenomenon, the secular counterpart of the cult of the Virgin Mary. Stucley himself has struggled to remain 'pure'. When Cant, one of the women, proffers sexual intercourse, he reacts violently and is immediately ashamed:

CANT: My man's not come back so you do his business for him - here - (She goes to lift her skirts. STUCLEY knocks her aside with a staggering blow)

STUCLEY: I won't be fouled by you, mad bitch, what's happened here, what! I slash your artery for you! (He draws a knife) Down you, in the muck and nettle! (She screams) MY TERRITORY!(He straddles her)

BATTER: HEY! (STUCLEY wounds her, she screams)

STUCLEY: My shame, you - LOOK WHAT YOU'VE MADE ME DO! I've - I've(He tosses the knife away, wipes his hand) To come home and hear vile stuff of that sort is - when I am so clean for my lover is - no homecoming, is it?'[15]

Stucley's violence is directly occasioned by the need to defend his 'purity': he is aroused but simultaneously threatened by Cant's desire. As such, he experiences a momentary loss of self-control which results in the mutilated/mutilating act of wounding Cant's breast - an act of which he is immediately ashamed. It is the first act of violence in the play and provokes wide resonance. It signals an important and ubiquitous theme in the drama - the archetypal equating of the land and the female body: Stucley emphasises this with his cry - *'My territory!'* - as he straddles Cant on the ground. A few lines later in the scene, Ann says - *'A woman, this country...'*[5] Stucley's rage at this particular point is because his 'territory' has 'returned to nature' - the result, not of sloth, but of the deliberate policy of the women; as Skinner states later in the scene:

> *SKINNER: First there was the bailiff, and we broke the bailiff. And then there was God, and we broke God. And lastly there was cock, and we broke that, too. Freed the ground, freed religion, freed the body. And went up this hill, standing together naked like the old female pack, growing to eat and not to market, friends to cattle who we milked but never slaughtered, joining the strips and dancing in the commons, the three days labour that we gave to priests gave instead to the hungry, turned the tithe barn into a hospital and FOUND CUNT BEAUTIFUL that we had hidden and suffered shame for, its lovely shapelessness, its colour all miraculous, what they had made dirty or worshipped out of ignorance...'*[6]

Here again this female freedom is linked to the hill where the scene is set (Ann tells Krak to get off her hill). The hill, in fact, becomes the focus of the struggle which develops between male and female forces. Stucley who has concentrated all his energies on resisting seduction, resisting change, preserving his ideal, has vested everything in control and the violence of brute mastery. His action in wounding Cant prefigures his 'wounding' of the hill through the building of the castle; Skinner, conversely, later exerts her witchcraft to activate the natural power of the hill against this imposition:

SKINNER: OLD HILL SAYS NO.....ROCK WEEPS AND STONE PROTESTS...[p15]

It is left to Krak, however, hitherto practically silent, to step into the confusion of Stucley's encounter with Cant and restore order:

KRAK: So much emotion, I think, is perfectly comprehensible, given the exertion of travelling, and all your exaggerated hopes. Some anti-climax is only to be expected.

STUCLEY: Yes. (He shrugs) Yes.

KRAK: The only requirement is the restoration of a little order, the rudiments of organisation established, and so on. The garden is a little overgrown, and minds gone wild through lack of discipline. Chaos is only apparent in my experience, like gravel shaken in water abhors the turbulence, and soon asserts itself in perfect order.[p.4]

Krak demonstrates here that he is a rationalist, espousing the scientific perspective of a universe ordered by inexorable laws. The apparent chaos of appearances belies the 'true' underlying reality whose principle is founded upon the highly classical notion of equilibrium - balance, economy, equivalence. Though Stucley embraces Krak - at one point literally - as architect of his castle, he does not embrace the Arab's rationalism; his own universe remains inexorably fatal and - in spite of his attempts at resistance - seductive.

Stucley, temporarily restored to spirits and all childish enthusiasm, chases off to find his wife:

> *STUCLEY: ...I run to my wife's bedroom. Catch her unprepared and all confusion. Oh, my lord, etcetera, half her plaits undone! Oh, my lord and all...*[85]

However, no sooner does he leave the stage than his wife appears. She has apparently been watching them and has emerged to confront Krak:

> *ANN: My belly's a fist. Went clench on seeing you, went rock. And womb a tumour. All my soft rigid. What are you doing on my hill?*
>
> *KRAK: (Turning) Looking. In so far as the mist permits.*
>
> *ANN: It always rains like this for strangers. Drapes itself in a fine drench, not liking to be spied on. A woman, this country....*[86]

In an interview in NTQ 8, Barker said:

> *...actually no conclusions can be arrived at by expertise, only by instinct. I think that one of the great powers of Greenham, although it has been ignored, and is probably destroyed now. But as a terribly important historic metaphor, it does stand for the power of instinct - which is what the play THE CASTLE is about.*[24]

Ann's immediate hostile reaction to Krak is entirely instinctive and totally irrational. When Skinner appears moments later, she reinforces Ann's feeling and acts instantly to 'stab him'. Both women sense that they may have lost their only chance of averting catastrophe:

> *ANN: I hope that wasn't - I do hope that wasn't - THE MOMENT AFTER WHICH - the fulcrum of disaster - I hope not.*
>
> *SKINNER: Miss one moment, twice as hard next time. Miss the next time, ten times as hard the next.*
>
> *ANN: All right -* [25]

As the play unfolds, their instinct is proved correct. Another element of Krak's 'Reason' evident in the quotation above is the gaze: when asked what he is doing, he replies simply - 'Looking.' The stage directions at the head of the scene, the beginning of the play, commence with -

A Hill. A MAN, wrapped against the rain, stares into a valley...[13]

He continues to 'stare' until, a full page later, he is asked the object of his gaze by Stucley:

KRAK: I am looking at this hill, which is an arc of pure limestone...[14]

This is clearly a gaze of some considerable intensity and, combined with Krak's enigmatic taciturnity, represents a significant elememt in the interactive dynamics of the scene. Later when Stucley is presented with the results of Krak's deliberations - the plan for the castle - this moment is echoed by the theatrical text in a very spectacular fashion:

STUCLEY's long stare is interrupted by a racket of construction as a massive framework for a spandrel descends slowly to the floor.[15]

The visual is of course the rational sense par excellence: Krak's visual 'rape' of the hill is a far more effective form of violence than Stucley's botched assault on Cant. It is this that Ann instinctively recognises and her words again reinforce the affinity of female body and hill.

As Krak makes good his escape, a crack emerges in the women's unity. Skinner has heard Ann refer to her returned husband as physically 'beautiful'; she freely admits that outwardly, at least, she finds him more attractive:

SKINNER: You called him beautiful. Your husband. Beautiful, you said.

ANN: He was. The bone has made an appearance. (Pause) Well, he is. HE IS.[65]

This is indicative of how Ann refuses to deny her own instinctive responses in the interests of personal or ideological commitment. She will not pacify the jealous Skinner by retracting or amending what she has said.

The remark is the hairline crack that opens up a gulf that finally overwhelms their love. Skinner's suspicion makes her ugly in Ann's eyes:

ANN: You go so ugly, in a second, at the bid of a thought, so ugly.[66]

Although they appear reconciled, their separation has begun. It is interesting in that the feelings concerning the lost opportunity to kill Krak thereby preventing the castle - the 'fulcrum of disaster' - apply in exactly the same moment to their own relationship. Skinner, at any rate, explicitly states later that the castle and her love are one and the same.

In the dialogue that follows, Skinner talks volubly of their female society and their relationship; it is almost a monologue in that Ann only seems to absorb and humour her lover.

SKINNER: I helped your births. And your conceptions. Sat by the bedroom, at the door, while you took the man's thing in you, shuddering with disgust and trying hard to see it only as the mating of dumb cattle -

ANN: It was -

SKINNER: Yes, and I managed. I did manage. And washed you, and parted your hair. I never knew such intimacy, did you? Tell me, all this unity!

ANN: Never - pg-7

It emerges later that Skinner herself is barren - an irony, considering her militant espousal of nature, that nature should have denied her personal fertility. The womb is frequently seen as the uniquely female attribute which links woman to nature. Skinner, perhaps sensing an evasive complaisance in Ann, is determined to confront her:

SKINNER: ..Europe is a million miles long, isn't it, how did they pick their way back here, AN ANT COULD PASS THROUGH A BONFIRE EASIER! (Ann laughs. SKINNER looks at her) How? (Pause)

ANN: Why are you looking at me like that?

SKINNER: How, then?

ANN: I suppose because -

SKINNER: You drew him. (Pause)

ANN: What?

SKINNER: Drew him. With your underneath. (Pause)

ANN: I do think - if we -

SKINNER: DOWN THERE CALLED TO HIM ACROSS THE SPACES!

ANN: Look -

SKINNER: I HATE GOD AND NATURE, THEY MADE US VIOLABLE AS BITCHES![17]

Skinner's espousal of feminist attitudes is very much a consciously willed gesture. She states earlier how she exerted all her witchcraft, her natural magic, to prevent the Crusaders returning. There is a sense, however, that she doubts profoundly what she professes most passionately and this contradiction emerges in her outburst here. She has little faith in the efficacy of her witchcraft. Her inclination to hate both 'God' and 'Nature', the latter the conventional feminist antithesis to the patriarchal deity, means that there is for her no ideological refuge in an alien universe. This intense feeling of exposure leads her to invest everything in her relationship with Ann. Her contention here, that Ann drew her husband back, is an accusation which is only

consistent with the magical world of seduction implying as it does action at a distance and the **reversal of causality**: it would be reasonable to say that Stucley was drawn to his wife - she being the passive object; it is entirely irrational to argue that *'DOWN THERE CALLED TO HIM'*. Yet seduction does not absolve the passive object of complicity in seductive action. According to Baudrillard, to become object is the seductive strategy par excellence.[3] The subjective 'truth' of this can be evidenced in the 'irrational' guilt that one experiences at the death of close friends or relatives. Because no direct causal link can be established, reason insists that we dismiss such emotions even though the feelings are nevertheless 'real' enough. A similar, though less dramatic seductive reversal, is claimed by Stucley when he assaults Cant:

STUCLEY:...LOOK WHAT YOU'VE MADE ME DO!...[4]

The scene between Ann and Skinner is cut short by the arrival of Stucley. Skinner leaves and there follows a cataclysmic confrontation between husband and wife. The writing here represents an extraordinary achievement on Barker's part in showing a mind fighting disintegration in the face of catastrophe. As I have already observed, Stucley feels for his wife a quasi- religious devotion and he has been anticipating this moment for years. When he enters, carrying *'a white garment'* which he wishes her to put on, Ann dismisses Skinner with the injunction - *'Trust me'*. Stucley obviously hears this and part of his mind is disturbed:

STUCLEY: Trust you? Why?(He looks at her) You look so - (Pause) Trust you? Why? (Pause) Imagine what I - if you would condescend to - what

I - the riot of my feelings when I look at - (Pause) Trust you to do what exactly? (Pause) In seven years I have aged twenty. And you, if anything, have grown younger, so we who were never boy and girl exactly have now met in some middling maturity. I have seen your face on tent roofs, don't laugh at me, will you? (Pause)

ANN: No.

STUCLEY: That is a ploughman's hag and you - what is it, exactly? (Pause) I found the church bunged up with cow and bird dung, the place we married in, really, what - (Pause) So I prayed in the nettles. (Pause) Very devout picture of young English warrior returning to his domain etcetera get your needle out and make a tapestry why don't you? Or don't you do that any more? (Pause) Christ knows what goes on here, you must explain to me over the hot milk at bedtime, everything changes and dreams are ballocks but you can't help dreaming, even knowing a dream is - (Pause) It is quite amusing coming back to this I was saying to the Arab every hundred yards I have this little paradise and he went mmm and mmm he knew the sardonic bastard, they are not romantic like us are they, muslims, and they're right! Please put this on because I -

ANN: No. (Pause)[illegible]

The confrontation is a seductive duel - increasingly desperate on Stucley's part - as he struggles to engage Ann on a level which will reassure him that

'everything is as it was'. Her apparent passivity, and I have discussed passivity above, is a strategy on her part which preserves her seductive enigma: she does not immediately present him with 'a position' - as Skinner would desire. She has already stated that she finds his appearance 'beautiful' - so there is an attraction on her part which is presumably what sustains his 'performance' in this 'moment' for so long. A directly comparable scene- to which I have already alluded - is to be found in the last of THE POSSIBILITIES - NOT HIM where a 'wife' confronts a husband returning after years in the war: she remains veiled for much of the time and the central tension expressed in the title is the question of identity - in every sense the man is, paradoxically, both 'same' and 'other' an ambiguous quality which renders him sexually intensely desirable but simultaneously morally dispensible. Here the veil is suggested in Ann's silence and ambiguity.

To return to the passage quoted above, it can be seen that most of Stucley's pauses are invitations to Ann to intervene - invitations or perhaps temptations which, for the most part, she refuses. It is important that the confrontation is presented as genuinely dramatic - i.e. that Ann is, initially at least, 'open' to being seduced. The audience should have the feeling that Stucley might win and in a way this eventuality is heralded by Skinner's irrational accusation. A 'closed' performance from Ann would invalidate the scene. On his part, Stucley can be seen to be suspended between different levels which demand an extraordinary technical agility from the actor: there is the persistent nagging suspicion expressed in the *'Trust you? Why?'*s; this contrasts starkly with the rapture expressed in the other lines where Stucley assays to seduce Ann by

performing his passion. He is well aware that one seduces with weakness and not only parades his vulnerability but draws attention to it - *'don't laugh at me, will you?'* This phrase is interesting in its possible resonances and ambiguities. It is in fact an invitation to Ann to do precisely that - laugh at him - though indulgently rather than derisively. The *'will you?'* can be read as a plea. For her to laugh in this way, would be to release the tension and to give him the reassurance he wants. Her *'No'*, though superficially accomodating his plea, positively reinforces the tension. It must be born in mind that every instance where Ann refuses a gesture of 'vulnerability' leaves Stucley terribly wounded and confused. At the same time it is highly likely that Ann also feels his pain but she must bluff and conceal any sympathy from him in order to preserve her strength.

This particular refusal causes him to recall his suspicion. He attempts pompously to gain the authority of the moral high ground with restrained indignation at the state of the church. When Ann does not respond, he immediately adjusts this with what is intended to be an attractive demonstration of humility and perhaps an element of pathos - *'So I prayed in the nettles.'* Her silence again undercuts his performance and leaves his gesture sadly exposed and ridiculous in its self-consciousness and calculation. Simply by not responding she imposes, yet does not impose, that meaning on him. He tries to retrieve the gesture and cover the wound by burlesquing himself - a frequent stratagem of his: *'Very devout picture....make a tapestry why don't you?'* As Stucley's agony continues, it becomes clear that he would be prepared to concede anything provided Ann still loved him. His comment about her explaining

'over the hot milk at bedtime' amply illustrates his dependency. Her second 'No' is a direct refusal to comply with his wishes. In the speech that follows, he tries to retrieve their relationship by recalling their wedding night, going on to describe how he has carried her image like a shrine in his heart through all the horrors and degradations of war:

> *STUCLEY: ... what we did in Hungary I would not horrify you with - they got more barmy by the hour. Not me, though. I thought she'll take my bleeding feet in her warm place, she'll lay me down in clean sheets and work warm oils into my skin and food, we'll spend whole days at - but everything is contrary, must be, mustn't it, I who jumped in every pond of murder kept this one thing pure in my head, pictured you half-naked on an English night, your skin which was translucent from one angle and deep-furrowed from another, your odour even which I caught once in the middle of a scrap, do you believe that, even smells are stored, I'm sorry I chucked your loom out of the window, amazing strength comes out of temper, it's half a ton that thing if it's - trust me, what does that mean?*[P.43]

One of the aspects of Stucley's character, his sense of identity, which needs to be noted concerns social class: he is self-consciously upper class, very much in the 'stiff upper lip' English public school mode, an influence which also finds expression in some of his more childish behaviour. Later in the play, when he begins seriously to regress, this becomes increasingly obvious:

STUCLEY: ... Gang meets at sunset by the camp! The password is - (He whispers in KRAK's ear) DON'T TELL! (He goes to leave) Gang meets at sunset and no girls!...' [36]

STUCLEY: ... Play snowballs with me! I did love boyhood more than anything! Play snowballs!' [37]

The latter request is also addressed to Krak and indicates how Stucley, having failed disastrously with women and sexuality, yearns for the simple pre-pubertal male companionship of 'school'. In the context of the Crusades, such references are of course strictly prochronistic but are entirely consistent with Barker's dramatic method.

Returning to Stucley's confrontation with Ann, this sense of superior identity reasserts itself like a tic in the phrase *'Not me, though'* which he repeats four times in this scene. This is a superiority, as the context of the phrase invariably implies, founded in a rigorous self-control. Class is also evident in his disparaging reference to Skinner as *'a ploughman's hag'* and it even enters his relationship with his wife: earlier, when he rushed off anticipating catching her in confusion, he imagined her saying *'Oh, my lord'*. The language of the fantasy he expresses here - *'I thought she'll take my bleeding feet in her warm place, she'll lay me down in clean sheets and work warm oils into my skin...'* carries Biblical connotations, specifically of Mary Magdalene and Christ, a theme which returns later. (It is not difficult to understand why Ann does not want to continue the marriage!) The *'pond of murder'* image is equally eloquent: the two

concepts are not linked in any obvious way - a pond connoting stillness rather than the violence associated with murder. The image reflects Stucley's psychology - what he does not see is that he brings the violence to the pond by jumping into it; as a gesture it also expresses a Canute-like fatuity. The reference to Ann's skin as *'deep-furrowed'* again reinforces the affinity of woman and earth. Stucley's apology for the loom is yet another desperate climb-down which serves to emphasise his abjection.

It is at this point that Ann utters her first sentence of the encounter; it is highly significant and decisive:

> *ANN: You've not changed. Thinner, but the same. For all the marching and the stabbing. Whereas quietly, here I have.*[p.8]

It is as if she had been assessing him while he spoke and had finally come to a decision. She had been interested in the physical difference, finding it attractive, and was obviously curious to know if his personality had altered. Ann has, presumably, decided in embarking upon her relationship with Skinner to abandon the husband she knew before the war; the only question that might arise would be whether this was the 'same' man. She concludes that it is and that her decision will therefore stand.

She proceeds without delay to tell him that she has not reciprocated his fidelity. Barker's stage directions indicate again his fascination for the moment of catastrophe:

> *ANN: No. (Pause. He is suspended between hysteria and disbelief)*[1]

The 'suspension', however, does not last long before giving way to full-blown hysteria. Stucley finds in this moment a revelation of universal scale. All of his experience is suddenly illuminated by a shattering light:

> *STUCLEY: I think when God says - CRUSH THIS BASTARD - I wish there was a priest here, but there isn't so I offer you my version, you hark to my theology - he really is the most THOROUGHGOING OF ALL DEITIES, no wonder we all bow down to him his grasp of pain and pressure is so exquisite and all-comprehending... And I have just fought the Holy War on His behalf! Oh, Lord and Master of Cruelty, who has no shred of mercy for thy servants, I worship thee!*[2]

As Ann proceeds to confirm his worst fears, his view of the deity is simultaneously strengthened:

> *STUCLEY: ... now tell me she has children by the very interlopers who greeted me as I climbed my very own steps.*
>
> *ANN: Yes.*

STUCLEY: Yes! Yes! I know the source of our religion! It is that He in His savagery is both excessive and remorseless and to our shrieks both deaf and blind![34]

Stucley's excesses can appear comical to an audience, but it is important that the performer should not play this up. His words here are not 'mere rhetoric', hysterical exaggerations; they are borne out in his subsequent behaviour. The actor playing Stucley needs to counterbalance the potentially ludicrous with a strong sense of the man's terrible pain. There is a tendency to dismiss his claims because they are obviously 'irrational' and 'the balance of his mind' is clearly disturbed. Yet the world of THE CASTLE and Barker's plays in general, is not rational: it is seductive and fatal. Baudrillard:

The power of events that happen to you without your having willed them, without your having anything to do with it. But not by chance. They happen, and this coincidence touches you, it's destined for you. Even if you didn't want it, **because** *you didn't want it, you're seduced by it. That's the whole difference between destiny and chance. For pure chance, even supposing that it exists, is entirely indifferent to us; pure occurrence has nothing seductive about it for us - it's objective, period. It is the strategy of chance we adopt to neutralize an event or attenuate its effect: 'It happened by chance'(Not my doing).....And here chance is quite helpful: it's enough to think (difficult as that is) that things happen without reason, or for a maximum of objective reasons (technical, material, statistical) that remove the responsibility from us, and which, in fact, absolve us from*

whatever the event could contain of a profoundly seductive nature, whose cause we might have wanted to be...[4]

It is in this way that the rational world of 'reality' is reassuring: reassurance, however, comes at a price because this draining off of the world's symbolic potency reduces what is left to grey banality.

Thus from a moral point of view, we may want to protect ourself by all sorts of alibis (including chance), from the fatal interconnections of events, but from a symbolic perspective it is deeply repugnant to have a neutral world, ruled by chance and thus innocuous and meaningless, and similarly for a world ruled by objective causes; neither one, although easier to live, can resist the fascinating imagination of a universe entirely ruled by a divine or diabolical chain of ***willed*** *coincidences, that is, a universe where we seduce events, where we induce them and make them happen by the omnipotence of thought - a cruel universe where no one is innocent, and especially not us, a universe where our subjectivity has dissolved (and we joyously accept it) because it has been absorbed into the automatism of events, into their objective unfolding. It has in some way become a world.*[5]

In a rational world, the world of 'reality', the fact for instance that Stucley had thrown his knife into the bushes during his previous encounter with Cant

thereby rendering it unavailable for stabbing his wife now, would be ascribed to Chance. Chance, however, is not possible in seduction where everything that happens is destiny. Stucley, who believes in power, must make sense of why an all-powerful deity chooses to treat him in this way. His strategy is to 'joyously accept' his pain; in gleefully anticipating new horrors, humiliations and frustrations which subsequently prove correct, he experiences the exhilaration of racing ahead of 'the mind of God'; he 'understands' God and has the satisfaction of willing events, - as he says later, on the discovery of a rival castle:

> *STUCLEY: Everything I fear, it comes to pass. Everything I imagine is vindicated. Awful talent I possess. DON'T I HAVE AN AWFUL TALENT? TALENT?*[p.34]

When, therefore, he has exhausted his hysteria and regained his self-control, he becomes - in a godlike way - cruel. He considers the possibility of cold-bloodedly murdering Ann:

> *STUCLEY: ... I could kill you and no one would bat an eyelid.*[p.3]

She still feels that she can influence him and suggests that he goes away. He bluffs giving her suggestion reasonable consideration:

> *ANN: Don't stay.*
>
> *STUCLEY: Don't stay?*

ANN: No. Be welcome, and pass through.

STUCLEY: One night and then -

ANN: Yes.

STUCLEY: What - in the stable, kip down and -

ANN: Not in the stable.

STUCLEY: Not in the stable? You mean I might -

ANN: Don't, please, become sarcastic, it -

STUCLEY: Inside the house, perhaps, we might just -

ANN: Useless sarcasm, it -

STUCLEY: Under the stairs and creep away at first light -

ANN: Undermines your honour -

STUCLEY: WHAT HONOUR YOU DISHEVELLED AND IMPERTINENT SLAG. (Pause) You see, you make me lose my temper, you make me abusive, why not stay, it is my home. [illegible]

Here, Stucley has acquired a sufficient degree of detachment and self-control to be able to play with Ann's seriousness. The moment she realises he is doing this she attempts to use his sense of 'honour' to subdue him. he rebuts this tactic by highlighting her hypocrisy in attempting to use it: the epithet 'dishevelled' no doubt refers to her appearance, particularly her hair(much reference is made to her 'plaits' in the course of the action). She attempts to challenge Stucley with the suggestion that he should simply go away:

ANN: Go on.

STUCLEY: To where?

ANN: The horizon.

STUCLEY: I own the horizon.

ANN: Cross it then. (Pause) I'm cruel, but I do it to be simple. To cut off hopes cleanly. No tearing wounds, I'm sorry if your dreams are spoiled but -

STUCLEY: It is perfectly kind of you -

ANN: Not kind -

STUCLEY:Yes, perfectly kind and typically considerate of you, I do appreciate the instinct but -

ANN: Not kind, I say -

STUCLEY: YES! Down on your knees, now.

ANN: What -

STUCLEY: On your knees, now -

ANN: Are you going to be -

STUCLEY: Down, now -

ANN: Childish and -

STUCLEY: Yes, I WAS YOUR CHILD, WASN'T I? (Pause. He suddenly weeps. She watches him, then goes to him. He embraces her, then thrusts her away) PENITENCE FOR ADULTERY![10]

Ann's suggestion here is an important article of faith with her: she believes that is always possible 'to pass on', to begin again somewhere else; she has faith in the permanent possibility of 'the other' - other places, other times, other people. Later she gives to the horribly tortured Skinner the same advice as she offers here to her husband. She herself, pregnant with Krak's child, pleads with him to leave the castle and 'go on over the horizon' with her. He tells her that there is nowhere to go to escape the castle and this brings about her suicide. Her final words -

ANN: ... (Pause. She looks at Krak) There is nowhere except where you are. Correct. Thank you. If it happens somewhere, it will happen everywhere. There is nowhere except where you are. Thank you for truth. (Pause. She kneels, pulls out a knife) Bring it down. All this.[399]

Stucley again plays with her sincerity, emphasising her kindness. It is clear, however, that he is now concerned merely with appearances and with power. He insists - against Ann's sincerity - that she **is** being kind - the appearance of kindness. He also tries to insist on the appearance of submission to his will - the kneeling. Her accusation of childishness causes him to confront her - and simultaneously perhaps himself - with the truth about their relationship - *'I WAS YOUR CHILD, WASN'T I?'*. She does not answer his question - tacitly admitting that he was. This revelation is a further blow and he collapses in tears, first instinctively seeking, then refusing the maternal comfort she offers.

Barker prefaces the title page of THE CASTLE with the question - 'What is Politics, but the absence of Desire ...?' When Stucley's desire is violently checked in this scene, he reverts abruptly to power and is seduced by the playful quality in power which is cruelty. His failure to enforce submission on Ann is followed immediately by the arrival of Hush - a decrepid octogenarian left behind by the Crusaders who has been used by the women to father the children of their new commonwealth. He forces Hush to kneel and confess his sins to his lord:

STUCLEY: ... Kiss my hands and tell me what you did against me. The more extravagant, the more credence I attach to it, promise you.

HUSH: I did not praise you in your absence.

STUCLEY: Oh, that's nothing, you mean you abused me, surely?

HUSH: Abused you, yes.

STUCLEY: Excellent, go on.

ANN: This is disgusting.

STUCLEY: Disgusting? No, he longs for his confession!''

In Hush, Stucley has found a subordinate who is prepared to be totally obsequious and say whatever he wants to hear. He is satisfied with appearances. Ann is horrified; the women have accorded dignity and respect to every individual, besides she is concerned that he will confess his sexual intercourse with her. Hush eventually, at Stucley's direct prompting, admits to precisely this but, ironically, he is not believed:

HUSH: I lay on her and on others naked and did put my seed in them and -

STUCLEY: Oh, rubbish, it's beyond belief. I hate bad lies, lies that fall apart, there's no entertainment in them.[11]

The truth or falsity of Hush's confessions is not the significant feature for Stucley: what concerns him in his world of appearances is the purely seductive quality of those appearances. It is interesting that Hush finds Stucley's mistreatment of him refreshing:

HUSH: Thank you.

STUCLEY: Thank me, why?

HUSH: Because the worst thing in age is the respect. The smile of condescension, and the hush with which the most banal opinion is received. The old know nothing. Fling them down. They made the world and they need punishing.[12]

Or is this merely a bluff on his part, designed to endear him to Stucley? (- who does in fact respond with some signs of affection.) The latter's exit lines express his new resolution:

STUCLEY: I cherish nothing, cherishing's out, and what was soft in me has liquified into a poison puddle. Not to be fooled. That's my dream now, THANK YOU, UNIVERSE! (Pause) Educated me. Educated me...(He goes out)[13]

His words here reflect the acceptance of a cruel universe indicated earlier in the scene. This confrontation of Stucley and Ann is of crucial importance to the development of the action leading on directly in the following scene to the building of the castle which is clearly linked to the former's state of mind.

The scene ends with Ann briefly upbraiding Hush because she feels he will do or say anything in order to continue his existence and is appalled at his lack of moral sense:

> *ANN: Why do you love your life so much? (He stops) So much that even dignity gets spewed, and truth kicked into blubber, and will itself as pliable as a string of gut? You have no appetite but life itself, I mean breathing and continuing. (He shrugs) There can't be a man alive with more children and less interest in the world they grow up in.*[p.12]

She herself has had the courage to face up to Stucley and defy him - which could easily have cost her her life. She is concerned naturally that her husband should not be able to reimpose his former authority. Hush's apparent will to self-subjection, however, is inauspicious in this respect. Her words remind one of the notion that the traditional role of women in the nurture of children predisposes them to having a wider moral concern than men. Her parting shot at Hush expresses a strong resentment of injustice:

> *IF YOU ACHIEVE IMMORTALITY I SHALL BE FURIOUS.*[p.12]

Scene Two begins with Batter telling another aged sycophant, Sponge, about his relationship with Krak. Batter is a thug who glories in his own violence but is strangely fascinated by the intellectual engineer. He feels a sense of proprietorship about the Arab whom he personally saved from slaughter:

> *BATTER: ... And he is mine, in all his rareness, mine, as if I'd birthed him, yes, DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT, I am his second mother!*[...]

He describes how he was engaged in an orgy of violence after entering Jerusalem - sparing no one. Suddenly he encountered Krak:

> *BATTER: ... And he stared into the little lights of what must have been - my kindness - and I stopped, the dagger in my hand tipped this way ... and that ... slippery in my fist. I pondered. AFTER EIGHTEEN STAIRCASES OF MURDER ... and of course, because I pondered, the genius was safe. Funny. Funny that I pondered when this was the very bugger who designed the fort...* [...]

Batter is describing a moment of pure seduction. His action, in *'pondering'*, is a mystery to him. Krak had apparently touched a quality hitherto completely repressed, something he was wholly unaware of within himself - his *'kindness'*; this again is the kind of reversal which is typical of seduction. It is interesting that Batter thinks of this moment as a birth - as if the old Krak had died and a new one been reborn in that instant; certainly it marked the commencement of a new life for Krak. Later in the play, Ann tells him that he needs to be born yet again:

ANN: It is you that needs to be born. I will be your midwife. Through the darkness, down the black canal - [illegible]

Batter's present infatuation for Krak is based upon his profound respect for his violence - a violence he recognises as being far superior to his own.

After Stucley has dragged in and dusted off his lapsed priest, Nailer, sending him to clean the church, Krak reveals his plan for the castle. This, again, is a crucial seductive moment:

STUCLEY: ... Go on ...(Krak hold out a large sheet of paper) Has he made a drawing for me? (He smiles) He has ... (He looks at Krak beaming) The Great Amazer! (He takes it, looks at it) Which way up is it? (He turns it round and round) I genuflect before the hieroglyphs but what -

KRAK: No place is not watched by another place. (STUCLEY nods) The heights are actually depths.

STUCLEY: Yup.

KRAK: The weak points are actually strong points.

STUCLEY: Yup.

KRAK: The entrances are exits.

STUCLEY: Yes!

KRAK: The doors lead into pits.

STUCLEY: Go on!

KRAK: It resembles a defence but is really an attack.

STUCLEY: Yes -

KRAK: It cannot be destroyed.

STUCLEY: Mmm -

KRAK: Therefore it is a threat -

STUCLEY: Mmm -

KRAK: It will makes enemies where there are none -

STUCLEY: You're losing me -

KRAK: It makes war necessary - (STUCLEY looks at him) It is the best thing I have ever done.

STUCLEY's long stare is interrupted by a racket of construction as a massive framework for a spandrel descends slowly to the floor.[14]

The significance of this castle is emphasised by the title of the play and during the course of the action it is physically built on stage: a prominence not often given to a physical object in Barker; I have asserted that his drama follows the Szondi model of interpersonal action which seeks in general to banish the world of objects. THE CASTLE is not a serious exception and, if anything, serves to reinforce the essentially interpersonal focus of his work because the castle in question is first and foremost a mental phenomenon. It arises from and constitutes the interrelations of the characters. This is not to suggest that the castle is not a 'thing in itself'; it certainly has a kind of identity. In discussing the focus of Barker's dramaturgy, I have advanced the view that the essential reference point of the 'interpersonal' is not the 'personal' but the 'inter' and the castle is such an 'inter' - a complex but nevertheless identifiable force field of negative energies. The sudden appearance of the castle here emphasises simultaneously both its insubstantial/magical quality and its substance: an ambiguity which adds to its seductive potency; it is summoned out of nowhere in response to a profound impulse of the human mind.

Stucley, as we have seen, is bent on a cruel dominance and the castle recommends itself to him for this reason. Historically, Barker is suggesting the castle of the Norman barons: not a system of communal defence like the Celtic or Saxon hill forts. But an alien imposition, offensive, the property of a

private individual, the function of which was to dominate and exploit the land. According to Professor R. Allen Brown:

> *there is no doubt that castles stood for lordship in men's minds and were the expression as well as much of the substance of lordly power and control.*[6]

The castle enabled this dominance to be achieved by a relatively small elite of armoured cavalry:

> *Because of the developing strength of fortification, because throughout the period of the castle's ascendancy defence was in the ascendant over attack, garrisons could be and were comparatively small; yet that small force could and did hold the district in which it was based unless it was locked up by a full-scale and prolonged investment involving a far greater force..*[7]

The fact that the castle was also a residence (and in the post-medieval world this became its principal function) has tended to obscure from a modern perspective some of its more brutal aspects - of which the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle provides eloquent testimony:

> *For every great man built him castles and held them against the king; and they filled the whole land with these castles. They sorely burdened the unhappy people of the country with forced labour on the castles; and when the castles were built they filled them with devils*

and wicked men. By night and by day they seized those whom they believed to have any wealth, whether they were men or women; and in order to get their gold and silver, they put them into prison and tortured them with unspeakable tortures, for never were martyrs tortured as they were. They hung them up by the feet and smoked them with foul smoke. They strung them up by the thumbs or by the head, and hung coats of mail on their feet. They tied knotted cords round their heads and twisted it till it entered the brain. They put them in dungeons wherein were adders and snakes and toads, and so destroyed them.[8]

Barker's castle draws upon all of these conventional historical functions and associations, yet its initial impact upon Stucley is manifestly seductive. In the first place, he is fascinated by Krak's intellectual power - *'The Great Amazer'* but does not understand the drawing. Krak elucidates, moving from concrete particularities to abstract generalities. Barker expresses the seduction in a kind of stichomythia which, instead of conveying conflict as is usual in classical drama, draws the characters together in an escalating vertigo of enthusiasm - Krak for his creativity and Stucley for the power it offers. It is significant the latter does not understand the wider implications of the edifice - *'You're losing me - '*. All of Krak's comments can be seen to refer directly to particular physical attributes of the medieval castle but Barker does also intend that the 'definition' should have wider resonance. Hence *'No place is not watched by another place'* suggests the mass surveillance of totalitarianism. His comments about *'heights'*,*'weak points'*, and *'entrances'*, are all reversals, with

the weakness/strength antithesis particularly associated with seduction. The castle is a labyrinth of deception and bluff. But, perhaps above all else and for Stucley in particular, it holds all the fascination of an enigma.

In this respect(its seductive, deceptive, enigmatic qualities), Barker's castle partakes of the nature of Kafka's castle in the novel of the same name. There, the central figure, Joseph K, arrives in a small town which is entirely dominated by a mysterious and sinister bureaucracy lodged in the castle; he becomes enmeshed in a seductive duel with this authority, a game of bluff and counterbluff, fought out through a series of endless intermediaries. In typical seductive fashion, K's aim, if it ever existed, is lost in the fascination of the duel and the inexorability of the next move. In this sense, Barker's castle, like Kafka's suggests a model of the more contemporary state, the origins of which literally date back to the castle society of William the Conqueror. It symbolises politics. At the time of the play's first production, the castle was widely seen as a metaphor for the the Cold War arms race which had intensified under Reagan; in this respect the constant need to improve and extend the castle, the way it seemed to draw everything else into its orbit, its growing threat of total armageddon (as manifested in Skinner's vision at the end of Act 1) bore out this particular connection, - as do Krak's comments that the castle will serve to make enemies where there are none and will make war necessary. Having said this, the castle is nevertheless a symbol which develops with the action of the play in the direction of less conventional associations.

Very shortly after the sudden and dramatic arrival of the beginnings of the castle, Skinner appears, 'draped in flowers'. She attempts to challenge Krak, as author of the castle, urging him to look at the 'superior geometry' of a flower. She is simply ignored both by him and Holiday; her 'feminist' protest is brushed aside. She reacts with anger:

> *SKINNER: ... - all right, don't look at it, why should I save you, why should I educate you-* [F15]

The antithesis here between a masculine culture of rationality (Krak's sharp, hard instruments) and a feminine one of nature and instinct is emphasised by Skinner; however, the manifest failure of her protest causes her to harden and she menacingly threatens Holiday with her witchcraft. Her instinct is to reject the male altogether. With the arrival of brute force in the shape of Batter, she departs with a gesture of contempt - she flings up her skirts and shows her arse.

Batter and Holiday consider her and their language again connects the female body with the land:

> *HOLIDAY: ... are these towers really going to be ninety foot above the curtain? I don't complain, every slab is food and drink to me, but ninety foot? Who are you - it's a quiet country what I see of it - no, the woman's touched, surely?*

BATTER: (contemplatively) Skinner's arse ...

HOLIDAY: What?

BATTER: He told me how he lay upon that arse, and she kept stiff as rock, neither moaning nor moving, but rock. So when the bishop asked for soldiers he was first forward, to get shot of her with Christ's permission.[p16]

Krak had seen the hill as 'an arc of pure limestone'; Ann had described her 'soft' as going 'rigid' at the sight of the engineer; rock was, of course, the ideal site for a castle because of the difficulty in undermining it. The implication here is that the castle is not purely and simply a product of the masculine but that the resistant feminine is also involved. Significantly and ironically, both Skinner and her husband find in the figure of Christ a solution to their sexual problems.

Holiday attempts to quiz Krak about the design of the castle but is met with silence and goes back to work. Batter has watched this non-exchange and continues to watch Krak who, for the first time, responds by stating his own feelings:

KRAK: Dialogue is not a right, is it? When idiots waylay geniuses, where is the obligation? (Pause) And words, like buckets, slop with meanings. (Pause) To talk, what is that but the exchange of clumsy

> *approximations, the false endeavour to share knowledge, the false endeavour to disseminate truths arrived at in seclusion? (Pause) When the majority are, perceptibly, incapable of the simplest intellectual discipline, what is the virtue of incessant speech? The whole of life serves to remind us we exist among inert banality.(Pause) I only state the obvious. The obvious being the starting point of architecture, as of any other science...*[p16]

Krak uses his silence to preserve his emotional detachment from the world in which he finds himself. His intellectual supremacy and pride in his reason allows him to dismiss others contemptuously as 'idiots'. Reason does not recognise the 'other' as such since everything in the universe is reducible to its own laws. As a rationalist, he finds verbal communication particularly distasteful because words are never merely definitive - they connote and can, at worst, be ambiguous. His world is secluded - even solipsistic(*'we exist among inert banality'*) and this, according to Levinas, is the very world of Reason itself, a world which must exclude and repress all forms of seduction with its irrational magic. As we discover later, Krak's rationalism is also an alibi: the life among *'inert banality'* may be sterile and grey - as Baudrillard says:

> *from a symbolic perspective it is deeply repugnant to have a neutral world, ruled by chance and thus innocuous and meaningless, and similarly for a world ruled by objective causes;*[9]

On the other hand this view does, according to Baudrillard -

> *...absolve us from whatever the event could contain of a profoundly seductive nature, whose cause we might have wanted to be.'*[16]

We see later that Krak's attitude has helped him to repress, to some extent at least, his emotional responses to the horrific butchery of his entire family. His character is as much in a state of violent reaction as Stucley's or Skinner's. It is necessary to point out, however, that Krak's scientific detachment here is also a performance for the benefit of his admirer, Batter, from whom he is consciously concealing a personal commitment - the destruction of his captors. Conceivably, this is the enigma which renders him such a fascinating figure to both Stucley and Batter.

The following scene, Scene 3, begins with Skinner physically tackling Cant whom she has caught having sex with one of the bricklayers. Cant describes her predicament:

> *CANT: ... It was easy before the builders come, but there are dozens of these geezers and they - I gaze at their trousers, honestly I do, whilst thinking, enemy, enemy! I do gaze so, though hating myself, obviously ...*[17]

Skinner feels that she should be punished but Ann finds Skinner's anger excessive:

SKINNER: ... We have done such things here and they come back and straddle us, where is the strength if we go up against the wall skirts up and occupied like that? (Pause) I do think, I do think, to understand is not to condone, is it? (Pause) I do feel so alone, do you feel that? (Pause) It always rains here, which we loved once. I love you and I wish we could just love, but no, this is the test, all love is tested, or else it cannot know its power ...

CANT: I'm sorry.[p18]

The problem for the women is power; Skinner begins here to insist on the 'power' of 'love', on 'strength'; crucially, she accepts the challenge posed by the castle, seeing it as a 'test' of their love. On the other hand, she has moments when she wishes things were as before, and when she says here that she feels alone, she indicates a profound doubt about Ann's love. She does, however, see clearly the long term implications of the castle:

SKINNER: Where there are builders, there are whores, and where there are whores, there are criminals, and after the criminals come the police, the great heap heaving, and what was peace and simple is dirt and struggle, and where there was a field to stand up straight in there is loud and frantic city. Stucley will make a city of this valley, what does he say to you?

ANN: Nothing.[p18]

Ann's lack of response in this scene is similar to her behaviour with Stucley. Like Stucley, Skinner is persistently attempting to probe and elicit reassurances which are not forthcoming. Like Stucley, she is continually forced to control her emotions:

> *SKINNER: Angry? Me? What? Mustn't be angry, no, be good, Skinner, be tolerant...*[p'g]

Eventually Skinner confronts Ann directly:

> *SKINNER: ... I WOULD RATHER YOU WERE DEAD THAN TOOK A STEP OR SHUFFLE BACK FROM ME. Dead, and I would do it. There I go, WHAT IS IT YOU LOOK SO DISTANT.*
>
> *ANN: I think you are - obsessive.(Pause)*
>
> *SKINNER: Obsessive, me? Obsessive? (Pause. She fights down something) I nearly got angry , then and nearly went - no - I will not - and - wait, the anger sinks - (Pause) Like tipping water on the sand, the anger goes, the anger vanishes - into what? I've no idea, my entrails, I assume. I do piss anger in the night, my pot is angerfull. (Pause) I am obsessive, why aren't you? (Pause) Every stone they raise is aimed at us. And things we have not dreamed of yet will come from it. Poems, love and gardening will be - and where you turn your eyes will be - and even the little middle of your heart which you think is your safe and actual self will be - transformed by it. I don't know*

how but even the way you plait your hair will be determined by it, and what we crop and even the colour of the babies, I do think its odd, so odd, that when you resist you are obsessive but when you succumb you are not WHOSE OBSESSION IS THIS THING or did you mean my love, they are the same thing actually.(Pause) They have a corridor of dungeons and somewhere are the occupants. they do not know yet and she fucked in there, not knowing it, of course, not being a witch could not imagine far enough, it is the pain of witches to see to the very end of things ...[p13]

Apart from showing the intensity of Skinner's passion for Ann, there are number of noteworthy points in this quotation. Firstly Skinner is fully aware of the extent to which the castle will transform everything - *'even the little middle of your heart'* - in which case their love will not survive in its present form. Secondly, Skinner assumes initially that Ann is objecting to her obsession with the castle; it only occurs to her later that she could be referring to the quality of her love - *'or did you mean my love'*. What is interesting is that she declares them to be the same thing. Her love for Ann has become indistinguishable from her resistance to the castle. She also connects the dungeons here with sexuality of a brutal and loveless kind - *'fucked in there'*; this is a theme which will be developed later.

The crucial issue which separates the women concerns the most effective way of proceeding: Ann believes she must continue to talk to her husband whereas

Skinner thinks there can be no talk between man and woman. Seduction, as far as she is concerned, is mere exploitation with the woman as victim:

> *SKINNER: ... No talking. Words, yes, the patter and the eyes on your belt* -[19]

She is also concerned about Ann having contact with her husband or men in general: she shows this at the end of the scene when Ann tries to talk to Krak who appears from the shadows of his creation:

> *ANN: Have you no children? I somehow think you have not looked in children's eyes* -
>
> *SKINNER: DO YOU THINK HE LISTENS TO THAT MAWKISHNESS? (Pause)*
>
> *KRAK: Children? Dead or alive?*[20]

This is the beginning of Ann's attempt to seduce Krak which, as a strategy, proves to be more effective than Skinner's confrontation. The challenge which Krak poses Ann is that of awakening his humanity, - of discovering his 'kindness', just as he, in his extremity, found Batter's. Though Krak's response here is intended to be disparaging, he does at least respond - divulging personal information and emotion - and Skinner's claim that he does not listen is refuted. Both Krak and Skinner found their identities on maintaining a contract - on resistance to seduction and change; Skinner asserts the permanence of her bond with Ann:

SKINNER: ... I am in the grip of this eccentric view that sworn love is binding -

KRAK steps out of the shadows.

KRAK: Why not? If sworn hatred is.[p20]

Krak's contract, concealed in and by his 'reason', is with his butchered family - for vengeance on his captors. Ann, on the other hand, can be seen continually to evade this kind of commitment - an evasion which manifests itself in her evasion of language, her avoidance of speech: she tells Skinner to 'trust' her, to 'trust signs'; as Stucley says:

STUCLEY: ... trust me, what does that mean?p8

Act 1 Scene 4 is principally concerned with Stucley's doctrinal reorganisation of religion in the light of his sufferings during the Crusades and the insights we have seen him pluck from the adversities of his homecoming. It will be recalled that he had concluded that God was a sadist. Stucley, as a lord, has the power to re-establish his domain, his world, to accord with his own particular sensibilities. Reactions to this scene tend to be extreme - some find it shockingly blasphemous, others grotesquely comical; I do not think, however, that such reactions constitute the intention of the scene - the action of which is a logical growth from what has preceded it. Things begin dramatically enough with Stucley entering to the praying figure of a recanted Nailer:

STUCLEY: Christ's cock.

NAILER: Yes ...?

STUCLEY: IS NOWHERE MENTIONED! (He flings the Bible at him. NAILER ducks)

NAILER: No...

STUCLEY: Nor the cocks of his disciples.

NAILER: No...

STUCLEY: Peculiar.[p.20]

Stucley takes up the conventional view of Christ as the deity made flesh, as the link whereby humanity may be reconciled with its creator - Christ as both fully man and God. Stucley, through sexuality, has known pain and ecstasy; he says -

STUCLEY: ... The deity made manifest knows neither pain nor ecstasy, what use is He?

STUCLEY: ... this Christ who never suffered for a woman, who never felt the feeling which MAKES NO SENSE. (Pause) He can lend no comfort who has not been all the places that we have.[p.21]

He is unable to identify with an asexual Christ and at this particular moment he feels the need for religious consolation, sublimating his thwarted desires. He has decided that Christ *'slagged Magdalene'* but that all references to his sexuality have been deleted from the Bible by *'neutered bishops'*. He orders Nailer to write the 'true' account of Christ and Magdalene according to his dictation:

> *STUCLEY: Yes, this is the Gospel of the Christ Erect! (He is inspired again) And by His gentleness, touches her heart, like any maiden rescued from the dragon gratitude stirs in her womb, she becomes to him the possibility of shared oblivion, she sheds all sin, and He experiences the - IRRATIONAL MANIFESTATIONS OF PITY WHICH IS - (Pause. He looks at NAILER, scrawling) Tumescence... (Pause) Got that?*
>
> *NAILER: Yes...*
>
> *STUCLEY: Now, we are closer to a man we understand, for at this moment of desire, Christ knows the common lot. (Pause) And she is sterile.*
>
> *NAILER: Sterile?*
>
> *STUCLEY: Diseased beyond conception, yes. So that they find, in passion, also tragedy ... (NAILER catches up, looks at STUCLEY) What use is a Christ who has not suffered everything? (He wanders a*

little) They say the jews killed Christ, but that's nonsense, the Almighty did. Why, did you say?

NAILER: Yes...

STUCLEY: Because His son discovered comfort. 'Oh, Father, why hast thou forsaken me?' Because in the body of the Magdalene He found the single place in which the madness of his father's world might be subdued. Unforgivable transgression the Lunatic could not forgive...(Pause. STUCLEY is moved by his own perceptions. He dries his eyes) You see how once Christ is restored to cock, all contradictions are resolved...

NAILER: The Church of Christ the Lover...[p.22]

Stucley's version naturally insists on a male dominance: Christ's attraction for Magdalene is described as the irrational manifestation of pity, - irrational because the seductive relation involves the element of weakness subduing strength; this relation is seen as redeeming the woman - *'she sheds all sin'*. His addition of sterility is again relevant to his own case but, notably, he fastens the blame for this on the woman (Ann, though childless with him, has had children while he was away). All of this describes his perception of himself up until his homecoming when the Lunatic/Cruel Father jealously murdered His son - Stucley/Christ for having discovered *'the single place in which the madness of his father's world might be subdued'*. Stucley's emphasis on the physicality of sex - *'cock','erect','tumescence'*, - serves to underline the conventionally

Freudian analogy of this with the 'erection' of the castle. (Skinner talked in Scene 3 of the men 'boring into' the (feminine) 'hill'.) Both 'erections' - physical and theological - go together to form a system of total mental and physical domination; Stucley makes this clear when he ordains Nailer bishop by placing a tool bag on his head and tells him to go out and preach:

> *STUCLEY: ... No, I mean invoke Christ the Lover round the estate. I mean increase the yield of the demesne and plant more acres. Plough the woods. I want a further hour off them, with Christ's encouragement, say Friday nights -* [p.23]

This apparent cynicism in no way invalidates Stucley's own religious feelings: the Church of Christ the Lover is not solely intended as an instrument of exploitation though obviously it lends itself to this and as such he finds it useful.

When Ann enters, Stucley flaunts his success with the castle:

> *STUCLEY: ...(Ann enters. He turns on her) We have the keep up to your horror! For some reason I can't guess the mortar is not perished by your chanting, nor do the slates fall when you wave the sapling sticks. (He goes towards her) As for windows, none, or fingernails in width. Stuff light. Stuff furnishings!* [p.23]

In so far as the castle connotes male sexuality, it is a sexuality erected in defiance of the female, violent, hard and comfortless. Krak had stated in Scene 2 that the castle was not a 'house' - meaning not a domestic place where the masculine and feminine live together in peace and reconciliation. On the other hand, Stucley is exerting his power to insist on the appearances of domestic harmony:

> *STUCLEY: ... YOU DISCUSS THINGS LIKE A PROPER WIFE! (Pause) Terrible impertinence.*[23-24]

Stucley rushes off to hasten the building work leaving Ann with the newly ordained Nailer who is mumbling prayers in a corner with the tool bag/mitre on his head. When she tries to remonstrate with him, he vents his detestation of the women's never-ending discussions.

> *ANN: Reg, there is a tool bag on your head. (Pause. He regards her with contempt)*
>
> *NAILER: Oh, you literal creature ... It was a tool bag ... it is no longer a tool bag, it is a badge ... IF YOU KNEW HOW I YEARNED FOR GOD!*
>
> *ANN: Which god? (Pause, then patiently)*

NAILER: The God which puts a stop to argument. The God who says, 'Thus I ordain it!' The God who puts his finger on the sin.

ANN: Sin...?

NAILER: WHY NOT SIN?(Pause. He gets up) And no more Reg.(He looks at her, goes out. A wind howls over the stage)[425]

We have already seen how Hush desires his own subservience. This applies likewise to the more 'educated' and superficially liberal Nailer whose longing for God is a longing for dogma. What many seek from religion is simple certainty - literally an end to the argument - especially the argument about right and wrong. At the same time, Nailer's ordainment means that he takes on a new, authoritative identity - *'no more Reg'*. The seductive challenge here is for Nailer to carry off his new identity in defiance of Ann insisting on his old one. In terms of seduction, he must be totally taken in by his own illusion. In this respect the transubstantiation of the tool bag is both symbolic and of the essence. As a man with a tool bag on his head, Nailer is an object of ridicule - as bishop in a mitre he is an object of veneration; it is an extreme test but, in his extremity, he succeeds triumphantly, marking yet another step in the onward march of the castle and the retreat of the women.

In Scene 5, the final scene of Act 1, Stucley appears, cavorting childishly in the wind. The castle has altered even the weather; he asks Krak to make it snow and when a flurry drifts across, he wrestles delightedly with the engineer.

Suddenly Krak begins to strangle him and equally suddenly stops. Both men are shocked at the hatred Krak has revealed. The effect, however, sends both of them scurrying back to the building. After a pause, Skinner enters with Cant; it appears she has been using her witchcraft to make it snow - presumably to hinder the progress of the castle. The amount, however, initially at least, is negligible and she feels that she has lost the power: it is a moment for her of deep despair. There is a clear contrast here between the manipulative and coercive power of Krak's rational technology(*'the wind is trapped'*) and the seductive power of Skinner's witchcraft. (Typically in Barker's dramaturgy, there is no objective indication as to who or what has caused the snow.) At her request, Cant leaves her and, in the snow, she sees a nightmare vision of armoured figures swearing an oath of neverending warfare and slaughter. Holiday enters -

> *HOLIDAY: Yep? (He looks around) Somebody ask for me?(Pause)*[2][3]

- in rational terms possibly in response to Stucley's call earlier in the scene - irrationally Skinner calls him with her 'underneath' just as she earlier accused Ann of calling Stucley.

> *HOLIDAY: ... (He is about to go, then, looking around him) I saw your arse...(Pause) Excuse me, but I saw your arse - you showed your arse and I - they say you don't like men - which is to do surely, with - who you 'ad to do with, surely ...(Pause) Anyway, I saw your arse... (He turns, despairingly, to go)*

SKINNER: All right.

HOLIDAY: (stops) What - you -

SKINNER: All right...

(The walls rise to reveal the interior of a keep. Black out.)[p.28]

In spite of its brevity and relatively undramatic nature, this is a seduction of crucial importance. Holiday has paradoxically found seduction in Skinner's gesture of contempt. He is well aware of the consciously intended meaning of the gesture but deliberately tries to subvert that by using it to establish a kind of intimacy between them. Skinner realises this but seizes the opportunity to kill the builder: in this world now dominated by reason, sexuality is the only natural magic left. It is significant that the sexuality in question is soulless and instrumental(Skinner claims later that the builder talked of *'mutual pleasure'*.) This 'dirty' quality is emphasised by Holiday's secretive approach - *'looking around him'*. The seduction also signals, as the final stage directions of the act indicate, a move into the interior of the castle.

Act 2 begins with Krak, in a soliloquy, describing the progress of the castle. It appears that Stucley is demanding more and more fortifications which, in a way, are logical extensions of each other. The process has clearly run away with Krak who has tried to persuade Stucley that he is secure enough already behind three walls.

> *KRAK: ... A fifth wall I predict will be necessary, and a sixth essential, to protect the fifth, necessitating the erection of twelve flanking towers. The castle is by definition, not definitive...*[pp33-34]

This mushrooming of the castle suggests that the original 'definitive' and exact creation has taken on a 'life' of its own which involves a constant and 'organic' process of reshaping - a process which is both escalatory and vertiginous. And all this is to confront an enemy who has not yet but *'cannot fail to materialize'*.

This is immediately followed by the hue and cry over Holiday's death which, it is quickly established, is a case of *'woman murder'*. Stucley's first concern is to complete the castle and he gives Holiday's job to his assistant, Brian.

> *STUCLEY: WHO WILL TRANSLATE MY BLUEPRINTS NOW! (ANN enters. STUCLEY turns on her) Who did this, you! Oh, her mask of kindness goes all scornful at the thought - what, me? (He swings on BRIAN) YOU DO THE JOB! (And to ANN) And such a crease of womanly dismay spreads down her jaw, and dignified long nose tips slightly with her arrogance - what, me? IT STOPS NOTHING, THIS.*[pp29-30]

It is important to note that Ann's continuing silent and disapproving presence is a significant factor in Stucley's world. He is infuriated by her passive defiance and assumes here that her response to the murder and her *'womanly*

dismay' are hypocritical. He sees his most effective counterstrike as being the continuation of the castle but with the addition of a new wall:

> *STUCLEY: Listen, I think morality is also bricks, the fifth wall is the wall of morals, did you think I could leave that untouched?*[ESO]

Stucley's comments here foreshadow his enforcing of morality with the trial of Skinner in the following scene. As I suggested earlier, he is retreating into a woman-hating male cameraderie.

Ann is left alone with Krak and seduces him, overwhelming his resistance with an inexorable feminine power:

> *ANN: Gravity. Parabolas. Equations. The first man's dead. Gravity. Parabolas. Equations. Are you glad? (KRAK does not move) Say yes. Because you are. That's why you're here. Grey head. Badger gnawed about the ears and eyes down, bitten old survivor of the slaughter, loosing off your wisdom when you think yourself alone, I know, I do know, grandfather of slain children, aping the advisor, aping the confidant, but actually, but actually, I do know badger-head, you want us dead. And not dead simply, but torn, parted, spiked on the oaks, limbs between the acorns, a real rucking of the favoured landscape, the peace when you came here made your heart knot with anger, I know, the castle is the magnet of extermination, it is not a house, is it, the castle is not a house... (Pause) I am so drawn to you I feel*

sick. (Pause) The man who suffers. The man who's lost. Success appalls me but pain I love. Your grey misery excites me. Can you stand a woman who talks of her cunt? I am all enlarged for you...(He stares at her) Now you humiliate me. By silence. I am not humiliated. (Pause)...so

Firstly, she confronts Krak with his secret purpose and his reasons for that purpose. After the pause, she states her intense attraction very directly. As is usual in seduction, it is not his strength but his weakness and hopeless misery which draws her. In stating her sexual attraction in this very direct way she gives him the opportunity of humiliating her: he attempts to shame her by staring silently. By stating his intention, thereby exposing the tactic, and deliberately refusing the shame, she redoubles the pressure on him. This is a familiar seductive tactic which I have already discussed with reference to Gay's seduction of Savage in THE BITE OF THE NIGHT. Krak decides he has no alternative but to confront the issue:

KRAK: They cut off my mother's head. She was senile and complaining. They dismembered my wife, whom I saw little of. And my daughter, with a glancing blow, spilled all her brains, as a clumsy man sends the drink flying off the table. And her I did not give all the attention that I might. I try to be truthful. I hate exaggeration. I hate the cultivated emotion.(Pause) And you say, come under my skirt. Under my skirt, oblivion and compensation, shoot your anger in my bowel, CUNT ALSO IS A DUNGEON! (Pause)

> *ANN: Enthralling shout...(Pause, then he suddenly laughs) And laugh, for that matter... (Pause, then he turns to leave) I mean, don't tell me it is virgins that you want, the unmarked flesh, untrodden map of girlhood, the look of fear and unhinged legs of - (He returns, slaps her face into silence. Pause) You have made my nose bleed...*[230]

When he describes the various fates of his family, Krak appears to be trying to put his emotions into perspective by distancing himself from them: he is being objective and rational - remaining in control. The seductive ingredient of these qualifications, however, is guilt; this is particularly clear when he talks of his neglected daughter. When he turns savagely on Ann with *'CUNT ALSO IS A DUNGEON'*, it is because he sees no possibility of salvation for himself in what she is offering. Instead of addressing his accusation, she rejoices in his emotional release. He tries to counter this by releasing his intensity in laughter and simultaneously signalling contempt: again, this is unprecedented for him(Ann commented earlier that he never smiled). As a rebuff it fails. Finally, he tries to escape by walking out but she taunts him into returning and slapping her - a loss of self-control. In a metaphorical sense, it is almost as if she systematically breaches each of the walls he refers to at the beginning of the scene.

It is worth commenting, at this point, on Krak's name which in the historical context of the Crusades suggests the famous castle, Krak des Chevaliers. 'Krak' or 'kerak' is the Levantine Arabic word for 'fortress'. So Krak too is the castle both by name and by nature in that he exists behind an elaborate system of

defences. Barker is also evoking the English homophone - 'crack'; appropriately, the first phrase cited in connection with this word in the Concise Oxford Dictionary is 'crack of doom'; even more significant in the context of the play is the slang use of the word to mean 'cunt'(see Partridge). Krak's obsessive drawing of fortifications becomes obsessive drawing of 'cunt' later in the play.

Another significant link connects Krak with Pain in CRIMES IN HOT COUNTRIES; T.E. Pain is Barker's version of Lawrence of Arabia. Like Krak, Pain is very consciously 'the genius', the man of massive intellectual power; like Krak, he is located 'in exile' - not merely in the 'hot country' but in the cultural desert of the 'other ranks' of the British Army, casting his perfectly phrased pearls before swinish squaddies; like Krak, he enjoys a privileged if ambiguous relationship with authority which is mesmerised by his seductive charisma; on another level, the violent and thuggish Music's attraction to Pain's intellectual sophistication parallels Batter's fascination with Krak. Both geniuses have a passion for military strategy and classical logic. Barker has reversed the Lawrence situation in the case of Krak; instead of an Englishman devising Arab miltary strategy in Arabia, an Arab devises English miltary strategy in England. The 'historical' Lawrence was a devotee of Medieval castles, travelling inter 1905-1910 thousands of miles on foot and by bicycle in Britain, France, Syria and Palestine to visit notable sites. The fruit of these investigations was the thesis he submitted for his degree at Oxford, later published under the title 'Crusader Castles'(1936).[11]. In it, he enthuses over Krak des Chevaliers as *'perhaps the best preserved and most wholly admirable castle in the world'.*[12] A notable feature of this fortress is its great south wall, known to Arab

historians as 'the mountain', which, towards its base, eschews the vertical in favour of a steep slope - a feature described in architectural parlance as a 'batter'. Of this, Lawrence says:

> *The reason for making the wall with so great a batter and such thickness - nearly 80 feet - is a little hard to find. Against an earthquake it would be useful perhaps, though no part of Crac has been damaged by one: the castle stands on rock, so mining was not greatly to be feared: and half the thickness would have been secure against any ram that ever was imagined.'*[13]

Krak des Chevaliers provides not only the name - Batter - but also the enigma of a strength massively in excess of any conceivable demands which might be made upon it - bringing to mind Stucley's *'unknown enemy ... who does not exist yet but who cannot fail to materialize.'*[p.29] Lawrence also remarks on the entry to Krak which is via a vaulted passageway described as *'almost dark'*,*'dark'*, *'steeply ascending'* and *'most confusing'*. When Ann proposes to Krak that they leave the castle, she says:

> *It is you that needs to be born. I will be your midwife. Through the darkness, down the black canal-* [p.35]

comprising yet another symbolic connection between the castle's architecture and the human body. Finally, there is the 'historical' Lawrence himself - dazzling seducer of establishment luminaries, the enigmatic 'genius' with iron self-control and

tortured sexuality - but also the supreme bluffer, poseur, charlatan and betrayer who serves to remind us that Krak, although he claims to *'hate the cultivated emotion'*, is certainly not beyond cultivating appearances: the all-rational military 'genius', whom Stucley refers to as *'the Great Amazer'*, is also a performance.

Act 2 Scene 2 is a trial scene. Barker has always been particularly adept at satirising the protocols and etiquettes of groups who consider themselves social elites - especially, as is usually the case, when these comprise an all-male preserve. The scene begins with the arrival of the two prosecutors. Nailer puts the prosecution case in a manner which is erudite, objective, balanced and apparently motivated by a selfless concern for the general good. The informal chat the two have before formal proceedings begin, however, subverts completely their 'official' performance:

NAILER: Thank you for coming.

POOL: Thank you for asking me.

NAILER: The rigours of travel.

POOL: Not to be undertaken lightly.

NAILER: No, indeed. Indeed, no. His trousers were down.

POOL: So I gather.

NAILER: I do think -

POOL: The absolute limit.

NAILER: And misuse of love.

POOL: Make that your angle.

NAILER: I will do.

POOL: The trust which resides in the moment of -

NAILER: Etcetera-

POOL: Most cruelly abused. Make that your angle.

NAILER: Thank you, I will.

POOL: Fucking bitches when your goolies are out...

NAILER: (To the court) A man proffers union - albeit....[PROOF]

It can be seen here how formal pleasantries rapidly lead on through a process of hints to expressions of (male) solidarity in outrage and, finally, deep

misogyny. The mask of Nailer's 'rhetoric' is exposed even before it is proposed. What is 'different' about this trial is that Skinner's crime is not simply murder (in the world of the castle, violent death does not per se excite moral outrage), but 'woman murder'. Once Nailer starts his peroration, Barker intercuts this with a speech from Skinner which is addressed not to the court but to Ann; in terms of staging this needs to be produced in a stylised manner to suggest the two speeches are in fact going on simultaneously (there is no communication whatsoever between defendant and prosecutor - they exist on different planes). Nailer's case is that in offering sexual intercourse, the man lays aside *'all those defences which the male by nature transports in his demeanour.'*

> *NAILER: A crime therefore, not against an individual - not against a single man most cruelly deceived...but against that universal trust, that universally upheld convention lying at the heart of all sexual relations....And thereby threatening not only the security of that most intimate love which God endowed man with...for peace and relief but...the very act of procreation itself....*[p.41]

The siege mentality of the castle serves to generate hysterical fears about any remaining areas of potential vulnerability or insecurity. The work of the court therefore seeks to establish and encase the sexual relation 'within a secure framework of law.' External law being - as I have argued - fundamental to the control-based world of rationality - as opposed to the immanent rule of seduction.

Dramatically the most powerful aspect of the scene is contributed by Skinner. She is brought into the court having been hideously tortured so that her utterances have the appearances of abjection and at times madness. Her concern is to speak to Ann and to express her anger:

> *SKINNER: ANN!...ANN!...WHERE ARE YOU, YOU BITCH - no, mustn't swear -* [illegible]

The physical memory of the torture she has suffered, causes her to check her outbursts and apologise abjectly: as she says of her tormenters:

> *- beg pardon - I have this - tone which - thanks to your expertise is mollified a little -* [illegible]

She attributes her anger to the unaccustomed exposure to daylight and tries desperately to reassure all that she is genuinely 'reformed':

> *SKINNER: I am not ill-tempered as a matter of fact, I don't know where that idea's come from that I - and anyway I know you hate it, loudness and shouting, you do, such delicate emotions and I - THEY HAVE DONE AWFUL THINGS TO ME DOWN THERE - do my best to be - to be contained - that way you have, you - THERE IS A ROOM DOWN THERE AND THEY DID TERRIBLE THINGS TO ME - I mean my cunt which had been so - which we had made so - THANKS TO YOU WAS DEAD - so it wasn't the abuse it might have been, the abuse they would have liked it to be had it been a living thing, were it the sacred and beautiful thing we had found it out to be and - am I going on, I do go on - are you -*

> *so thank you I hated it and the more they hurt it the better I - I was actually gratified, believe it or not, yes, gratified -* [p.31]

The words in capitals indicate breaches in Skinner's self-control and should be blurted - almost involuntarily. Barker deliberately seeks to make the words *'DOWN THERE'* ambiguous, intending them to signify both dungeon and cunt. This follows through consistently the symbolic theme of equating the land with the female body. The dungeon is, conventionally, where the edifice of the castle penetrates the land - underground. The most significant statement, however, is Skinner's assertion that she willed the torture of her sexual organs; she wanted her cunt to suffer because Ann had betrayed their love (*'my cunt which...THANKS TO YOU WAS DEAD'*). This is another example of a crucial seductive reversal, an acceptance and willing of calamity which parallels Stucley's acceptance of the lashes of fate administered to him by a cruel and sadistic deity.

The central thematic of this scene is of a tortured sexuality - in the widest possible sense of that phrase. Skinner's words referring to her own sufferings are clearly relevant to the institutionalised misogyny of patriarchal society:

> *They think of everything - they do - imaginations - you should see the - INVENTION DOWN THERE - makes you gasp the length of their hatred - the uncoiled length of hatred -* [p.32]

Peering round the court, Skinner is unable to see Ann and asks for a stool to sit on. When one is brought, she leaps back from it expecting a trap, then in

complete contradiction to her alarm, she sinks wearily onto it - as if she didn't care whether it bit her or not; this kind of sudden change of attitude is typical of her fragmented personality in this scene.

Skinner seems here remote and disconnected from the court. Stucley even more so:

> *STUCLEY: ...Having hewn away two hills to make us safe, having knifed the landscape to preserve us we find - horror of horrors - THE WORST WITHIN. (Pause, he looks at all of them) I find that a blow, I do, I who have reeled under so many blows find that - a blow. Who can you trust? TRUST! (He shrieks at them, the word is a thing butted at them) I say in friendship, I say in comradeship, I say without malice YOU ARE ALL TRAITORS!*[p.32]

Stucley's intensifying paranoia in this scene clearly marks another stage in the escalating process of the castle: he goes on to insist on all the repressive measures of a police state. Nailer shows that he understands his role as ideologist:

> *STUCLEY: ...I have changed my view of God. I no longer regard Him as an evil deity, that was excessive, evil, no. He's mad. It is only by recognizing God is mad that we can satisfactorily explain the random nature of - you say, you are the theologian.*

NAILER: It appears to us He was not always mad -

STUCLEY: Not always, no -

NAILER: But became so, driven to insanity by the failure and contradiction of His works -

STUCLEY: I understand Him![32-33]

Stucley requires a deity fabricated in his own image. As a tyrant, giving ear only to what he wants to hear, he presumably surrounds himself with people like Nailer. From this scene on, his presence conveys a sinister remoteness which most of us are familiar with only from witnessing on television the grotesque charades of third world dictators. Particularly bizarre and embarrassing are his references in open court to his sexual incontinence:

STUCLEY: ... I sleep alone in sheets grey with tossing, I cannot keep a white sheet white, do you find this? Grey by the morning. Does anyone find this? The launderers are frantic.

BATTER: Yes.

STUCLEY: You do? What is it?

BATTER: I don't know...it could be...I don't know...

STUCLEY: Why grey, I wonder?[32]

While it is necessary to express agreement with him, Batter finds it impossible state the obvious. Like Skinner, Stucley presents another aspect of tortured sexuality. Barker also makes Stucley express himself in a manner similar to Skinner, suddenly blurting out statements which appear involuntarily to voice deep-seated fears, intuitions and repressions:

STUCLEY: THEY ARE BUILDING A CASTLE OVER THE HILL AND IT'S BIGGER THAN THIS. (Pause) Given God is now a lunatic, I think, sadly, we are near to the Apocalypse ...[33]

The first of these sentences should sound almost as if spoken by another person; when Stucley reverts to 'character' to speak the second sentence, it should be performed as if the first sentence hadn't been uttered. His intuition about the other castle - it is at this stage pure intuition, though confirmed in the following scene - together with his thoughts on the Apocalypse strongly suggest that he is in the grip of a powerful death wish.

Suddenly Skinner sees Ann and leaps to her feet:

SKINNER: WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO YOUR HAIR? (Pause) It's plaited in a funny way, what have you - IT'S VILE.(Pause) Well, no, it's not, it's pretty, vile and pretty at the same time, DID YOU TAKE HIM IN YOUR MOUTH, I MUST KNOW.[34]

It will be recalled that Skinner had said previously that the castle would affect everything - even the way Ann plaited her hair; she is particularly shocked because her former lover's appearance strikes her as being intended to please someone else. A violent spasm of jealousy gives way after a pause to melancholy reflection:

> *SKINNER: ... This floor, laid over flowers we once laid on, this cruel floor will become the site of giggling picnics, clots of children wandering with music in their ears and not one will think, not one, A WOMAN WRITHED HERE ONCE. The problem is to divest yourself of temporality, is that what you do? (She looks at NAILER) I gave up, and longed to die, and yet I did not die. That all life should be bound up in one randomly encountered individual defies the dumb will of the flesh clamouring for continuation, life would not have it! I hate you, do you know why, because you prove to me that nothing is, nothing at all is, THE THING WITHOUT WHICH NOTHING ELSE IS POSSIBLE.*[p33]

Skinner said in Act 1 Scene 3 that it was *'the pain of witches to see to the very end of things'*; here, she sees beyond the physical end of the castle to the contemporary world with its indifference to her struggles; the word 'writhed' is deliberately ambiguous implying both sexual love and torture. Her comment about temporality indicates that she recognises this awareness of time is precisely the source of her pain. Nailer, whom she addresses here, seems to have no difficulty in consigning to oblivion all previous commitments and professions of faith in the interests of physical survival - *'the dumb will of the flesh*

clamouring for continuation'. She sees that her commitment to Ann(*'one randomly encountered individual'*) is opposed by life itself - which is why she wanted to die. Life itself, however, would not let her die. She hates both Ann and life because they have proved to her that 'the thing without which nothing else is possible' - love - does not exist. In banal terms, she is disillusioned. Her language indicates that she has succumbed to the world of banality, of rationalism: Ann is referred to as *'one randomly encountered individual'* but the concept of 'the random' is essentially rational; in seduction, it doesn't exist because everything is destiny. In Act 1 Scene 3, Krak stated:

> *KRAK: ...The whole of life serves to remind us that we exist among inert banality.*[P16]

Skinner who insisted that there was no separate *'love life'*, that *'the colour of the love stains everything'*, that one did not step from one life to the other - *'banality to love, love to banality'*[P13], now lives *'amongst inert banality'*.

Skinner's performance here is based on the confident assumption that she is about to be executed - which is what she wants; death will at least provide the oblivion she seeks. However, in a fit of bravado, she dismisses the right of the court and challenges Stucley to pass sentence - on the grounds that only those who have suffered like herself should have this prerogative. In so doing, she underestimates his cruelty. What Stucley had found so irresistibly seductive about his deity was not death, as Skinner earlier states, but *'his grasp of pain*

and pressure'.[p.92] He takes up Skinner's challenge and sentences her to the embrace of the rotting corpse of her victim:

> *STUCLEY: Tie her to the body of her victim.(Pause)*
>
> *SKINNER: Tie her to -*
>
> *STUCLEY: And turn her loose.*[p.93]

She is horrified.

Scene 3 begins with massive explosions and panic. Krak tells Stucley that there is - in actual fact - another castle in the East:

> *KRAK: You knew, and I knew, there could not be only this one, but this one would breed other. And there is one. Called the Fortress.*
>
> *STUCLEY: Bigger than this ...*
>
> *KRAK: Bigger. Three times the towers and polygonal. With ravelins beyond a double ditch, which I never thought of... (STUCLEY stares for a moment in disbelief)*

STUCLEY: Everything I fear, it comes to pass. Everything I imagine is vindicated. Awful talent I possess. DON'T I HAVE AN AWFUL TALENT? TALENT?[p.34]

Barker's writing demonstrates very clearly how Stucley's death-wish works. It is significant that his line - *'Bigger than this ...'* - is not a question; by positing the other castle in his imagination, ultimately he conjures it into reality. He is seduced by the power of his capacity to envisage catastrophe, his intuitive comprehension of a cruel fate. He orders massive increases in the fortifications of the castle, - increases which confound Krak. After a fourth boom, Stucley demands to know what the noise is:

KRAK: The coming of the English desert... (Pause)

STUCLEY: Yes...

NAILER: Almighty! Almighty!

STUCLEY: Yes...

NAILER: Oh, Almighty, Oh, Almighty...!

STUCLEY: Extinction of the worthless, the obliteration of the melancholy crawl from the puddle to the puddle, from the puddle of the maternal belly to the puddle of the old man's involuntary bladder ...Good...and they make such a fuss of murder...NOT ME THOUGH.[p.34]

Stucley assents to universal destruction, the extinction of a life which is worthless. His final words reassert his rigorous self-control, his stoicism and his sense of superiority. The events of this scene serve to intensify the doom-laden atmosphere and sense of looming catastrophe.

The others all depart leaving Krak who reflects uneasily on the new castle or perhaps rather on the mind of its designer - an enigma to him. Ann enters, pregnant, and proposes that they leave together:

> *ANN: We find a rock.*
>
> *KRAK: Stink of death to English woods. Hips on the fences. Flies a noisy garment on the entrail in the bracken.*
>
> *ANN: I have your child in here.*
>
> *KRAK: The trooper boots the bud open and sends my - (Pause) Said my, then... (Pause. He smiles) Error.*[35]

The present situation seems to represent the fulfulment of Krak's secret purpose - the total destruction of his captors and their land. Here he attempts to cling to this strategy in the face of Ann insisting that he cannot simply divorce himself from life in the way that Stucley has; he is involved through his child. Because his present life as birthed by Batter is in fact dedicated to death, she offers herself as midwife for yet another birth. He tells her(and

here there is a clear parallel with nuclear warfare) that there is no refuge or escape from the death-engines of the castle. Ann turns on him with what is her first truly violent outburst:

> *ANN: ALL RIGHT, WISDOM! ALL RIGHT, LOGIC!(Pause) I have a child in here, stone death to argument, floats in water, all pessimism filtered, lucky infant spared compelling reasons why it should acquiesce in death.(She turns to go)*
>
> *KRAK: IS THERE ANY MAN YOU HAVE NOT COPULATED WITH?(She stops) I wonder...*[P35]

What Ann is roused to anger by is the spiritual and ideological climate of acceptance of death, the malaise and miasma which dominate the castle; also, as I have remarked already, she has always believed in the possibility of passing on - of 'otherness' - now she finds herself trapped. As she turns to go, Krak attempts to distance himself from her and the child. I think that the stage direction here - *She stops* - is particularly important, suggesting that his comment has wounded her deeply. His follow-up - *'I wonder...'* - indicates that he realises this and is, in a clumsy way, an attempt to retract.

Before she can leave, however, Skinner enters with the corpse of Holiday strapped to her front, an object of contempt and abuse. The stage directions say she is *'a grotesque parody of pregnancy'* and as such she confronts the preganant Ann. Her first statements all concern the practicalities of coping

with her condition which she ironically likens to pregnancy - *'much morning sickness all times of the day'*. Her condition has brought about two horrific discoveries: firstly, she has gotten used it and in fact quite accepts it(when Ann suggests that she go elsewhere to *'find peace and rub the thing off you'*, she refuses - *'Yes to punishment. Yes to blows.'*) Secondly, she has discovered she can live without others and seems to take a certain pride in the uniqueness of her state. Ann weeps in despair but Krak stares fixedly at Skinner throughout the scene in much the same way as he stared at the hill in Act 1, building a dramatic tension. Ann's distress is, at least in part, because she feels she is responsible for Skinner's plight - a notion Skinner herself derides, mockingly warning Krak:

> *SKINNER: ...Careful! She's after your suicide! Hanging off the battlements for love! The corpse erect! Through her thin smile the knowledge even in death she got you up!(Mimicking) Did I do this? (She turns to ANN) This is my place, more stones the better and pisspans, pour on! You and your reproductive satisfactions, your breasts and your lactation, dresses forever soddened at the tit, IT DID GET ON MY WICK A BIT, envy of course, envy, envy, envy of course. I belong here. I am the castle also.*
>
> *ANN: You do suck your hatreds. You do - suck - so. And he - also sucks his.*[p36]

Skinner's attitude to Ann manifests a pattern fairly similar to Stucley's: passionate love followed by violent and anguished hatred, followed by a settled

hatred as expressed here; it will be recalled that Stucley similarly mimicked and sneered at his wife's femininity. Skinner sees Ann here as deliberately thirsting for the anguish and suffering she leaves in her wake, - even though she pretends that it distresses her. Skinner also admits her envy of Ann's fertility - an envy which apparently was always there: her final words here indicate that she feels it is because of this envy that she *'belongs'* - she too is the castle. Ann's comment points out how Skinner and Krak and Stucley are comparable in feeding off negative emotions - a few lines further on she specifies pessimism and fear. Her words are illustrated immediately when a group of hooded prisoners shuffle in; Skinner gleefully directs them to the dungeon and mockingly anticipates what is in store for them. Batter, who is conducting them, confirms her status as an accepted part of castle life by greeting her in a familiar and almost friendly fashion:

BATTER: English summer...

SKINNER: Fuckin' 'ell...

BATTER: (as he passes). Take care...

SKINNER: Will do...[p37]

Ann, unable to contemplate this, has already fled, so when Batter and the prisoners file out, the silent and staring Krak is left alone with Skinner who unconcernedly starts to eat an apple.

To Skinner's amazement, Krak suddenly kneels at her feet:

> *KRAK: The Book of Cunt. (Pause)*
>
> *SKINNER: What book is that?*
>
> *KRAK: The Book of Cunt says all men can be saved.*[p37]

Beginning to doubt the value of science with which he has identified himself, he sees in Skinner an alternative to the beliefs he confidently proclaimed. It will be recalled that she had confronted him in Act 1 Scene 2 draped in flowers and ordered him to contemplate the *'superior geometry'* of a flower; then he completely ignored her. What draws him to nature, however, is not the flower but cunt:

> *KRAK: Where's cunt's geometry? The thing has got no angles! And no measure, neither width nor depth, how can you trust what has no measurements? Don't tell them I came here...*[p37]

Skinner seduces Krak intellectually; he sees her essentially as an enigmatic source of female wisdom (the symbolism of the apple-eating strongly suggests this): whereas before, her conscious struggle to move him did nothing, he is seduced now by her self-possession and indifference. Krak's 'confession' to Skinner shows that he is in a state of confusion: Ann has sexually seduced him and in that seduction he finds the promise of salvation:

KRAK: ... She pulled me down. I did not pull her. She pulled me. In the shadow of the turret, in the apex of the angle with the wall, in the slender crack of thirty-nine degrees, she, using the ledge to fix her heels, levered her parts over me. Shoes fell, drawers fell, drowned argument in her spreading underneath...(Pause) European woman with her passion for old men, wants to drown their history in her bowel...!(Pause)

SKINNER: Scares you...[137]

Krak' description of Ann's actions here with the references to his fortifications is intended to suggest the breaching of the castle: she takes him by force. What had attracted Ann to him was his pain, his history; this she absorbs into her body, providing him with oblivion and peace. Krak is compulsively drawn to questioning Skinner here because she had known Ann as a lover. The possibility of salvation, however, lies in cunt which has no fixed geometrical properties, - as such it cannot be controlled in the way that rational constructs can. Krak is terrified at the possibility of his fate being beyond his control. His repeated plea - *'Don't tell them I came here'* - suggests that commerce with Skinner is forbidden in spite of the fact that her presence is tolerated. The arrival of Cant and Hush with food for her indicates that she 'is becoming a focus of dissent within the castle; her previous opposition together with her apparent martyrdom will confer an aura of deity upon her. As Harriet Walter, who played Skinner in the first RSC production of the play in 1985, says:

> *...the only time she wins back support is when she is considered a figure who is emptied, who has conquered pain and is above and beyond desire and therefore a political totem, the perfect leader. She attracts the villagers with their thought of that personal vacuum...*'[14]

The realisation nevertheless comes as a shock to Skinner:

> *SKINNER: Oh, God, Oh, Nature, I AM GOING TO BE WORSHIPPED.*[p.37]

These words suggest she sees this as yet another trick played by a cruel and ironic fate: she has just accommodated herself to total abjection; she is not actually being worshipped as yet but she suddenly intuits the next cards she will be dealt because, like Stucley, she understands and can anticipate the mind of God.

In Scene 4, Stucley confronts Krak with an accusation of treachery, claiming that he has personally witnessed him trading drawings with the engineer of the Fortress. Krak is apparently unimpressed by this; his pride in his creation, which in Act 1 Scene 2 he claimed could not be destroyed, has been shattered:

> *KRAK: Gave him all my drawings. And got all his. They are experimenting with a substance that can bring down walls without getting beneath them. Everything before this weapon will be obsolete. This, for example is entirely redundant as a convincing method of defence -* [p.39]

In broad historical terms this can be seen to correspond to the redundancy of vertical fortification in the face of massive advances in firepower. In terms of the three classic elements of military strategy - armour, firepower and mobility, the castle represented the zenith of armour. Defence from firepower thereafter was sought by digging down into the earth - as in trench warfare. In a sense, however, there was a conceptual resurgence of the castle in Reagan's 'Star Wars' project with its aim of providing a totally secure defence umbrella against nuclear attack.

Krak has lost interest in military architecture and is obsessively drawing cunt - *'in 27 versions'*. It is interesting to note the element of unlikely continuity between castle and cunt in this respect. The former had started life as a single sharply and geometrically definitive drawing; gradually as more walls and towers were added, Krak was forced to admit that the definition was lost - *'The castle is by definition, not definitive...'*. Now he pours out drawing after drawing in an attempt to define the indefinite. (And here there is a parallel with another 'genius' whose name is linked to military architecture - Leonardo Da Vinci.)As was the case with Ann, in spite of his outrage, it is clear that Stucley is prepared to overlook or turn a blind eye to any treachery, provided that Krak humours him and they carry on with the game:

> *STUCLEY: DON'T DRAW CUNT. I'M TALKING! (Pause) This is a crisis, isn't it? Is it, or isn't it? You sit there - you have always been so - had this - manner of stillness - most becoming but also sinister - dignity but also malevolence - easy superiority of the captive*

intellect - IS THAT MY WIFE'S BITS - I wouldn't know them - what man would - I know, you see - I am aware - I do know everything - I do - I think you have done this all to spite me - correct me if I'm wrong -

KRAK: Spite -

STUCLEY: Spite me, yes -

KRAK: Spite? I do not think the word - unless my English fails me - is quite sufficient to contain the volume of the sentiment...[page]

The relationship between Krak and Stucley has also been a seductive duel - a game of challenging each other by constantly escalating the castle - now one has demanded staggering additional defences, now the other; latterly Krak, who has lost his positive, creative fascination with the castle, has challenged Stucley by his relationship with Ann and by his blatant treachery: he is pushing the limits of Stucley's dependence on the castle and on himself. Stucley, for his part, is prepared to use his weakness and dependence to seduce Krak - *'This is a crisis, isn't it?'*. Even when the moment of confrontation is forced upon him and he voices the ultimate unspeakable secret - that Krak had intended the castle to destroy him (which he knows and Krak knows he knows and he knows Krak knows he knows etc.) - he plays his weakness in the rider - *'correct me if I'm wrong-'*. Ann had accused Krak of *'aping the adviser, aping the confidant'*; the problem for Krak is how far he is seduced by his own role-playing - and by Stucley. This moment, for the latter, represents another catastrophe similar to

his confrontation with Ann in Act 1 Scene 1. What amazes him is the magnitude of Krak's anger and the measure of his self-control:

> *STUCLEY: You blind draughtsman...all the madness in the immaculately ordered words... in the clean drawings...all the temper in the perfect curve...(He pretends to flinch) MIND YOUR FACES! DUCK HIS GUTS! INTELLECTUAL BURSTS!*[338]

He attempts to refuse Krak's 'spite' in the same way that Ann refused Krak's humiliation:

> *STUCLEY: ...But I am not spited. If you do not feel spited no amount of spite can hurt you, Christ was the same, NIGEL! (Pause) We burn people like this. Who give away our secrets. Burn them in a chair. Fry them, and the fat goes - human fat goes, spit...! Does - spit!*[339]

As he did with Skinner, Stucley seeks here to turn the tables on Krak by an act of malevolent imagination which takes his opponent's move and caps it: he will return Krak's 'spite' by physically transforming him into 'spit(e)'.

At this point Ann enters and looks at them:

> *ANN: The ease of making children. The facility of numerousness. Plague, yes, but after the plague, the endless copulation of the*

immune. All these children, children everywhere and I thought, this one matters, alone of them this one matters because it came from love. But I thought wrongly. I thought wrongly. (Pause. She looks at KRAK) There is nowhere except where you are. Correct. Thank you. If it happens somewhere, it will happen everywhere. There is nowhere except where you are. Thank you for truth. (Pause. She kneels, pulls out a knife) Bring it down. All this. (She threatens her belly. Pause)

STUCLEY: You won't. (Pause) You won't because you cannot. Your mind wants to, but you cannot, and you won't...

(Pause. He holds out his hand for the knife. She plunges it into herself. A scream. The wall flies out. The exterior wall flies in. In a panic, SOLDIERS. Things falling.)[23]

Ann's speech here should be considered in the light of Krak's sneer in the previous scene when he rejected her - *'IS THERE ANY MAN YOU HAVE NOT COPULATED WITH?'* as well as Skinner's and Stucley's jibes at her fertility. She is shattered by what she sees as her failure in love with Krak, and has decided to kill herself and her child. She has taken the logic of Krak's assertion that there is nowhere else and has intuited from this that *'If it happens somewhere, it will happen everywhere'*. Like Skinner and Stucley, she feels she has lost love but understands clearly that love is not possible in the life of the castle and no 'other' life is possible. The will to love can only triumph by willing the end of the life of the castle. There is also a sense here that her threat is a challenge to Krak(the stage directions say she looks at him); she pauses after

saying *'I thought wrongly'*, giving him the opportunity to disagree; she pauses when she kneels, when she threatens her belly and there are pauses during and after Stucley's lines; throughout all of these Krak refuses to intervene. The stage directions at the end of the scene suggest the cosmic repercussions of Ann's individual act. The castle remains but the action is flung outside; this is the first step in its demolition, in the sense that it no longer encompasses everything but is present now as an object.

In the *'haze of light'*, we discover that the *'things falling'* are the bodies of pregnant women who are throwing themselves in vast numbers off the walls. Ann's death has proved as seductive as she perhaps intuited it would be and has been the catalyst which sparked off a suicide epidemic amongst the other women. Nailer vainly threatens the women with judgement in the afterlife but finally orders the imprisonment and shackling of all those who are pregnant. Batter, who has already shown signs of impatience with Stucley as well as aimiability towards Skinner, doubtfully asks Cant's opinion:

> *CANT: We birth 'em, and you kill 'em. Can't be right we deliver for your slaughter. Cow mothers. Not an opinion.*[P40]

A dazed Krak wanders among the bodies of the dead women, reflecting on his relationship with Ann:

KRAK: She undressed me... (They look at him) I lay there thinking...what is she...what does she...undressed me and...(Pause) What is the word?

BATTER: Fucked?

KRAK: Fucked! (He laughs, as never before) Fucked! (Pause) Went over me...the flesh...with such...inch by inch with such...(Pause) What is the word?

CANT: Desire. (He stares at her, then throwing himself at her feet, tears open his shirt, exposing his flesh to her)

KRAK: Show me.[p40]

He is still attempting to reduce his experience with Ann to a set of concepts, reproducible technology - an attitude which lies at the basis of much contemporary thinking about sex: in fact the whole notion of a science of sexuality is inimical to seduction and desire. Krak insists on Cant attempting to demonstrate desire; she makes half-hearted efforts to touch him then runs out.

KRAK: Not it...

CANT: Trying but I...

KRAK: Not it!

CANT: Can't just go -

KRAK: NOT IT! NOT IT![p40]

When Stucley enters and sees him, he immediately recognises his condition:

STUCLEY: Lost love...! Nothing, nothing like lost love...(He rests a hand on KRAK's bent head) And she was of such sympathy, such womanly wisdom I could not bring myself to take revenge, any man would, you say, yes, any man would! Not me, though...!(He draws KRAK's head to his side) And you, dear brother in lost love, I UNDERSTAND.[p40-41]

Stucley can reconcile himself to Krak in their common grief. The engineer's desolation is the greater because Ann's final gesture has implicated him in her fate and won the duel for her: he called her bluff in the matter of her suicide. Krak's belated discovery of love parallels Ilona's in THE POWER OF THE DOG: like Lvov in THE LAST SUPPER, Ann has used the gesture of her death to impose an utterly binding pact on the living.

Amidst the general atmosphere of catastrophic grief, Stucley announces that the new walls will be built low thereby preventing such fatalities. They all stare at him and, after a pause, Batter invites him to go for a walk with him. Stucley demurs but Batter soothes him like a child, reminding him for former triumphs in

Jerusalem, eventually picking him up and carrying him out in his arms. Stucley no longer has any power to resist; his very substance seems to have vanished leaving only a thin husk. The only person to protest is Krak:

> *KRAK: (to the soldiers) His last walk. His last walk. (They ignore him) Listen, his last walk...*[p.41]

His intervention serves to underline that fact that there is a bond between himself and Stucley; the latter is not merely the hated captor marked down for destruction. As a final gesture, Krak offers the soldiers his own head to be sliced through with an axe:

> *KRAK: ... Slice it round the top and SSSSSSS the great stench of dead language SSSSSSS the great stench of dead elegance dead manners SSSSSSS articulation and explanation dead all dead YOU DON'T HOLD WOMEN PROPERLY IN BED.*[p.41]

At the outset of the play, Krak considered the brain he offers here to be that of a genius, priding himself on his intellectual sophistication; now he considers all that as *'dead'* and not only dead but putrifying. Interestingly, his words here (*'language','elegance','manners',etc.*) seem to refer to his seductive charisma rather than his scientific skills per se. The important thing is *'to hold women properly in bed.'* This sentence betrays his persistently rationalist turn of mind: he realises that the whole catastrophe of the castle concerns relations between men and women; however, the notion that there is a 'proper' way of

approaching this is perhaps somewhat reductive and a continuation of the thinking he has just shown in his 'experiment' with Cant.

The final scene, again outside the walls, begins with Batter and Nailer approaching Skinner with the offer of a new church. By this time the body of Holiday is reduced to a skeleton.

> *BATTER: New church. Tell her.*
>
> *NAILER: The Holy Congregation of the Wise Womb.*[p41]

With the removal of Stucley, Batter wishes to set up a new state; as he appears to be wise to Hume's maxim that all government is founded solely upon opinion (we have already seen him fishing for Cant's), he has had Nailer assemble a new ideology:

> *NAILER:... We acknowledge the uniquely female relationship with the origin of life, the irrational but superior consciousness located in-*
>
> *SKINNER: Sod wombs -* [p42]

This is obviously a reaction against the male, rationalist culture of Stucley's regime. Skinner is disinclined to cooperate because she hates wombs; being barren herself, she envied and resented Ann's easy fertility. Additionally she sees no reason why she should help Batter:

SKINNER: ... I won't help you govern your state, bailiff made monarch by a stroke of the knife...[142]

He reflects for a moment and then offers power directly to her. At first, ever-suspicious, she thinks they are joking or playing some cruel trick, but when she realises they are sincere, the effect is dramatic:

SKINNER: ... Wait a minute, wait, what's your - get me swelling, get me gloating, dangle it before her eyes - she blobs about the eyes, the eyes are vast and breath goes in and out, in-out, in-out, pant, pant, the bitch is hooked, the bitch is netted, running with the water of desire GIVE ME POWER WHAT FOR - (Pause) All right yes...[142]

Skinner's self-description here is of a sexual excitement but what produces this is not the prospect of sex but the prospect of power. When Nailer throws the keys down, she pounces upon them and instantly demands vengeance for all her sufferings:

SKINNER: ... Reconciliation and oblivion, NO! GREAT UGLY STICK OF TEMPER RATHER (She turns on her heel) Nobody say it's all because I'm barren! I have had children, I have done my labour side by side, and felt myself halved by her spasms, my floor fell out with hers and yes, I haemorrhaged (Pause. They stare at her. She goes to the wall, runs her hand over the stone) I can't be kind. How I have wanted to be kind. But lost all feeling for it...Why wasn't I killed? The best

thing is to perish in the struggle...(She turns to BATTER and NAILER) No. (She tosses the keys down) I shall be too cruel...[14]

What one has to account for here is Skinner's sudden change of heart: how she can renounce the power which excited her so violently. In Act 1 Scene 1, Skinner reminded Ann of the births she refers to here:

SKINNER: I helped your births ... And washed you, and parted your hair. I never knew such intimacy, did you? Tell me, all this unity! [6-7]

In recalling the shared births, she touches upon the moment when she was closest to Ann - so close in empathising with her birth-pains, that she herself bled. The resurgence of this terrible and painful memory in Skinner who has apparently succeeded obliterating love from her life, momentarily counteracts her lust for vengeance and she turns to the castle wall as if searching for a way through. After a moment she despairs of the effort, feeling that kindness is now beyond her. Harriet Walter, the actress who played Skinner in the first production of the play, says:

...she knows she still has embers burning inside her which, in the final scene, she does not want to have stirred up again. Right at her core is a connection between power and love; if love is killed, what use is power - [15]

When she renounces power, a voice is heard from the wall:

KRAK: Got to.

SKINNER: Who says?

KRAK: Got to! (Pause. She looks around)

SKINNER: Out the shadows, who thinks the only perfect circle is the cunt in birth...(KRAK emerges from a cleft in the wall)

KRAK: Demolition needs a drawing too...(Pause)

SKINNER: Demolition? What's that?(A roar as jets streak low. Out of the silence, SKINNER strains in recollection) There was no government...does anyone remember...there was none...there was none...there was none...[p43]

For a moment it seems as if the wall itself is speaking or Skinner is being exhorted by a disembodied imperative. It is significant symbolically that she commands Krak out of the wall- as if the human faculty that created it is now to be used against it. His comment on demolition serves to confirm this. It also implies, however, that the removal of the castle needs to be planned - a matter of organisation - which is why he insists she takes power. Skinner's assertion that there was no government may be seen as countering Krak's characteristic reliance on reason and power. But as the jets emphasise the essential contemporaneity of the play, the final impression of them both struggling with the issue, is a positive one.

In this examination of THE CASTLE, I have attempted to sketch an outline of what might be said to happen in the play. To do this it has been necessary to consider the texture of the symbolism and to set the play within a wider cultural context in order to illuminate some of the thinking which informs it. Having done this, however, I am aware of a range of different possibilities available to performers at any particular moment in the drama. A character expresses an attitude; who is to say what their intention is? The actor performs the lines but this performance is informed by reacting with sensitivity to a context of the other characters' performances. What makes any performance dramatic is the extent to which the action is 'live' and actors are making genuine choices on stage: Barker's plays allow them to do precisely this. I have taken speeches at face value which could be played as bluff. Take, for example, Ann's suicide: does she adhere simply and unswervingly to a course of action determined before she enters - as might perhaps be the impression formed on an initial reading of the script? Could it be the case that she enters without the slightest intention of killing herself, confident in her power to force a response from Krak - as well perhaps as from the other party to the castle 'duet' - Stucley, that both men 'see through' the bluff, 'call' it and force upon her an escalation she had not intended? Do her own words, initiated as a performance intended to seduce others finally and fatally end by seducing her? To what extent does she take Stucley's words - *'You won't'* - as the final and most crushingly humiliating challenge? To what extent are they intended as such? Or does Ann consider them merely impotent bluster, being entirely fixed upon Krak's obdurate silence? To what extent is Krak bluffing indifference?

In the Royal Shakespeare Company's premiere of THE CASTLE(The Pit.October 1985), Penny Downie played Ann:

> *This is what I learnt more than anything from the play, that the Stanislavski idea of working in a totally logical set of progressions - 'if she eats this for breakfast than obviously she will be like this at lunch' - the questions 'who am I, what is my process' are useless.'*[6]

She views character as essentially unstable:

> *With Ann, you are a walking set of contradictions, which create your character. It's not logical, it's very, very dangerous. Unless you've got danger - which is sexual energy onstage, to me - you're depriving an audience. To me, the most important thing is a character's sexuality, and therefore the way they think, it's extraordinarily dangerous. Your character becomes the sum total of the contradictions within it - you are your contradictions, you're not your logic - because if you always know how you're going to react in any given situation, you may as well just telephone it in!'*[7]

The stress she lays upon 'sexual energy' corresponds with the emphasis I have placed upon seduction which is of course most easily and obviously identified within the context of sexuality; Penny Downie also specifically refers to the element of risk and the possibility of illogical reversal(contradictions) - both of which have been discussed as integral to the processes of seduction. An

important factor in the potency of seduction is the sense of an opening up of possibilities:

> *It's made me completely reassess how I play a part. It's difficult, because it is a matter of letting go all your preconceptions and logic and, once you've made some preliminary choices, going onstage every night open and blank to some extent.'*[18].

Penny Downie does emphasise, however, that this openness is an informed openness where the actor has fully considered all the implications and possibilities available to their character: it is in no sense a plea for the retention of some sort of unsophisticated naivety:

> *Harriet Walter's greatness in the role of Skinner was I think something to do with the fact that she'd made a lot of choices, she'd done heaps of work, technically, emotionally, examining possibilities and all of this was 'on tap', but was, on each night, open - that's what makes it wonderfully clean.'*[19]

This studiedly ontological approach to acting, the eschewing of conscious objectives - particularly the highly structured and prescriptive systems of the Royal Court 'clarity' school of Gaskill and Stafford Clark - makes possible Grotowski's demand for a performance which is not willed:

> *To act - that is to react - not to conduct the process but to refer it to personal experiences and to be conducted. The process must take us.*[20]

Seduction is interaction and the energy of seduction arises out of interaction; by clearing the mind in the way suggested here, the performer lays him/herself open to respond with maximum sensitivity to other performers and to the audience.

While it is not inaccurate to say that Barker's characters 'perform' themselves, it needs to be emphasised firstly that the most important 'performances' are duets - not solos, and secondly that performances are often undercut or, as Barker puts it, 'abolished' by others. In productions of his work, the most salient impression has often tended to be of actors performing their own speech acts rather than reacting to those of others and, because he endows all his characters with articulacy, this can make it appear as if they are permanently 'in control' - a collection of impenetrable pebbles rattling around within the structure of the play. The essential drama, however, as I have suggested, is where control is relinquished in seduction or lost altogether and the emotional interactive process needs to be brought out strongly by the actors. Whether one defines this as 'subtext' is a matter of semantics; what is involved, however, is a secret economy, a shifting web of pacts, challenges, betrayals and complicities. Both JUDITH and THE CASTLE demonstrate this clearly. It is interesting that, in the case of the premiere production of THE CASTLE, the

actors had actively to resist the director's attempts to impose ideological 'messages' upon the theatrical text. Kath Rogers, who played Cant:

> *Nick Hamm, the director, was terrified that the play would be thought anti-feminist. He spent weeks....trying to soften the women - he kept saying: the audience will go mad, they won't listen to you. He didn't want us to be hard, he didn't want us to be unsympathetic, and we had to insist on our weaknesses, our flaws .... He would have liked us to hang up baby clothes, add Greenham incidents. We kept saying no ... by making too many parallels with Greenham, you trivialise the play...*[21]

As directors, actors, academics or audiences, we none of us approach a drama with completely 'open' minds, allowing the work to 'speak' directly to us. We bring expectations, preconceptions, 'knowledge', a mountain of second-hand experience in terms of which Barker is often dismissed as incomprehensible or ideologically unsound. I believe that contemporary requirements and expectations from theatre have become extremely narrow and specialised, the 'function' of drama 'understood' in terms of crude communication theories. In a way, people 'know' too much and all knowledge can serve to conceal. If my study has relied heavily on the philosophical, then this is because a return to first principles helps to put knowledge in perspective and opens up the possibility of **not knowing** - as Barker says 'the pain of unknowing', 'The ecstasy of not knowing for once'.[22] This, in turn, makes possible exploration and discovery. Barker uses the interactive format of drama to re-pose the question of what it means

to be be human; 'freedom and obligation, will and decision', as Szondi put it.[23] I would suggest that the concept of seduction provides an apposite focus for those concerned with staging his work. For seduction is the art of the irrational. Not to purvey a doctrine of irrationality. But only the irrational can challenge Reason(the active virtue, not the abstraction) into being. Just as it is only the moral dilemma, the moral abyss, the moral vacuum, - which activates serious ethical reflection. Democracy, the political practice of freedom, atrophies not when people believe the 'wrong' things but when the capacity to reason has fallen into general desuetude. The irrational is the necessary Other of Reason without which it quickly falls into its 'proper' vice of 'Self-communion.'

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. ARGUMENTS FOR A THEATRE. Howard Barker. John Calder.1989.

2. Only one of Bond's plays has ever been televised in this country (THE SEA) and of the ten plays Barker has been commissioned to write for BBC television only four have been transmitted(three of these date from pre-1975 and are comparatively immature pieces). Bond has only had two plays staged in large London auditoria - at the National Theatre. In London, Barker has never been produced in any space larger than the Royal Court (440).

3. Bond - 'in a letter of 6 January 1978' quoted in BOND:A STUDY OF HIS PLAYS by Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts Eyre Methuen 1980. p.20.

4. Barker interviewed by Simon Trussler and Malcolm Hay.NEW THEATRE VOICES OF THE SEVENTIES Eyre Methuen 1981 p.187

5. LEAR by Edward Bond. Act Three Scene Two. p.79 Methuen 1972.

6. 'Bond Unbound' by Martin Esslin. Review of SAVED in PLAYS AND PLAYERS. April 1969.

7. SAVED, LEAR, THE SEA, BINGO, THE FOOL.

8. THE WORLDS, RESTORATION.

9. SAVED. Eyre Methuen 1973. Author's Note.p.5

10. BOND: A STUDY OF HIS PLAYS by Hay & Roberts.p.64.

11. Ibidem.p.266. Quoting Bond from a discussion at the Young People's Theatre Festival at the Royal Court in July 1977.

12. SAVED.p.67.

13. Bond's phrase. Author's Note to SAVED.

14. Howard Barker. From an unpublished interview with Charles Lamb. 23.4.87. See Appendix 1.

15. Ibidem.

16. 'Bond Unbound' by Martin Esslin.Review of SAVED in PLAYS AND PLAYERS. April 1969.

17. 'This is an unashamedly snobbish right-wing play....Not only do the upper class in THE FOOL possess all the grace and intelligence; they

have all the kindness too. In contrast to this adulation of the well-born Mr Bond represents the common people as brutal, vindictive, sadistic, and perverted..' Harold Hobson. Review of THE FOOL. SUNDAY TIMES(23.11.75)

18. From CHEEK by Howard Barker. Methuen 'New short Plays 3'1972. p.13.

19. From BARKER'S BITE an interview with Steve Grant.PLAYS AND PLAYERS December 1975.

20. Howard Barker. From an unpublished interview with Charles Lamb. 23.4.87. Appendix 1.

21. Edward Bond quoted in Hay & Roberts.p.61.

22. Hay & Roberts.p.62.

23. Ibid.p.63.

24. Richard Gilman in his introduction to FARMYARD AND FOUR PLAYS by Franz Xaver Kroetz. Urizen Books 1976. p.9.

25. ARGUMENTS FOR A THEATRE. Howard Barker. John Calder 1989.p12.

26. Michael Billington reviewing THE CASTLE in THE GUARDIAN (18.10.85)

27. Giles Gordon reviewing DOWNCHILD in THE TIMES (25.10.85)

28. Bond has referred to EARLY MORNING as 'my freedom play' GAMBIT 17.p.14.

29.EARLY MORNING.Edward Bond. John Calder 1971.pp.7-8.

30.EARLY MORNING.p.26.

31.EARLY MORNING.p.13.

32.EARLY MORNING.p.28-29.

33.EARLY MORNING.p.66.

34.EARLY MORNING.p.69.

35.EARLY MORNING.p.79.

36.EARLY MORNING.p.87.

37.EARLY MORNING.p.87-88.

38.EARLY MORNING.p.88.

39.EARLY MORNING.p.97.

40.EARLY MORNING.p.97.

41. EARLY MORNING. p. 16.

42. EDWARD BOND. David L. Hirst. Macmillan Modern Dramatists. 1985. pp105-106.

43. Hirst. p. 106.

44. EARLY MORNING. p. 27.

45. EARLY MORNING. p. 28.

46. EARLY MORNING. p. 74.

47. EARLY MORNING. p. 75.

48. EARLY MORNING. p. 78.

49. EARLY MORNING. pp. 89-90.

50. EARLY MORNING. p. 96.

51. EARLY MORNING. p. 101.

52. EARLY MORNING. p. 101.

53. EARLY MORNING. p. 109.

54. EARLY MORNING. p. 120.

55. Hay & Roberts. Quoting from an interview with Gaskill. p. 84.

56. Ibid. p. 85.

57. Ibid. p. 86.

58. Bergson. 'Le Rire'. In DRAMATIC CRITICISM. Ed. Dukore.

59. Martin Esslin. Review of EARLY MORNING in PLAYS AND PLAYERS. May 1969.

60. Hay & Roberts. p. 83-84.

61. William Gaskill interviewed by Irving Wardle. GAMBIT 17. p. 43.

62. ARGUMENTS FOR A THEATRE. p. 89.

63. ARGUMENTS FOR A THEATRE. p. 89.

64. Howard Barker. From an unpublished interview with Charles Lamb. Appendix 1.

65. Howard Barker. Interview with Simon Trussler and Malcolm Hay in NEW THEATRE VOICES OF THE SEVENTIES. p. 187.

66. NO END OF BLAME by Howard Barker.John Calder 1981.p.32.

67. CLAW.In STRIPWELL & CLAW. Howard Barker. John Calder 1977.p.136.

68. CLAW.p.137.

69. CLAW.p.143.

70. NEW THEATRE VOICES OF THE SEVENTIES.p.189 - 190.

71. CLAW.pp.226-227.

72. John Ashford. Review of CLAW in PLAYS AND PLAYERS. March 1975.

73. 'Ten Years of Political Theatre 1968 - 1978' by David Edgar. TQ No 32.

74. Harold Hobson. Review of CLAW in SUNDAY TIMES (4.2.75)

75. SDs CLAW.p.214.

76. CLAW.p.217.

77. CLAW.p.224.

78. CLAW.p.227.

79. CLAW.p.230.

80. Howard Barker. From an unpublished interview with Charles Lamb. Appendix 1.

81. Howard Barker.'49 Asides for a Tragic Theatre'. GUARDIAN.(10.2.86)

82. Howard Barker. From an unpublished interview with Charles Lamb. Appendix 1.

83. John Barber. Review of DOWNCHILD in DAILY TELEGRAPH.(25.10.85)

84. '..his courtiers are grotesques assembled so that the author can tell us at length how grotesque they are.' Robert Cushman. Review of VICTORY. OBSERVER (27.3.83)

85. Howard Barker. From an unpublished interview with Charles Lamb. Appendix 1.

86. e.g. 'No consistent viewpoint'..Jonathan Hammond.PLAYS & PLAYERS Nov.1975

87. BOND Hay and Roberts.p.88.

88. EARLY MORNING.p.103.

89. Ibid.p.15.

CHAPTER TWO.

1. William Gaskill talking to David Roper:'Royal Court and After'PLAYS & PLAYERS August 1982.

2. 'My life was actually very like the one shown in the play.'Hay & Roberts.p.64

3. ANGER AND AFTER by John Russell Taylor.Penguin 1962.p.281.

4. Ibid.p.281.

5. William Gaskill.'Director in Interview'. PLAYS & PLAYERS.May1970.

6. Hay & Roberts.p.92.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN.

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2. New Theatre Quarterly 8. November 1986. 'Oppression, Resistance, and the Writer's Testament'. Howard Barker interviewed by Finlay Donesky.p.338.

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4. FATAL STRATEGIES.pp.159-160.

5. FATAL STRATEGIES.pp160-161.

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8. The ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE. Tr.& Ed. G.N.Garmonsway. Everyman. 1953.p.264.

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16. Ibid.p.258.

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18. Ibid.p.258.

19. Ibid.pp.258-259.

20. TOWARDS A POOR THEATRE.p.205.

21. From 'The Castle'. An article by Helen Carr, based on an interview with Penny Downie, Kath Rogers and Harriet Walter, in WOMAN'S REVIEW NUMBER TWO 1986.

22. THE BITE OF THE NIGHT.p.2.

23. THEORY OF THE MODERN DRAMA.p.7.

APPENDIX ONE

INTERVIEW WITH HOWARD BARKER 23/4/87

CL: Looking back over the last 20 years, which political events affected you most significantly as a writer. Obviously some of your plays reflect attitudes towards particular Labour or Conservative governments.

HB: Well I'm tempted to answer that by saying very few events as such - presumably, I take it you're referring to key events, international events like the Vietnam War or the 68 Troubles. Whilst I may have gone on the odd demonstration against Vietnam, I can't trace any signs of it affecting what I wrote. And its certainly true that in '68 I knew very little of what was supposed to have been going on. So I'm obviously not like the rest of my generation in that those things, so far as I am aware, didn't make a lot of impact on my work. But it would be silly to say that events haven't in some way affected my work. Greenham was one of the starting points for THE CASTLE - probably because my wife was involved in that. I found that a very symbolic event. It would be easy to point to say, the third act of CLAW, or CREDENTIALS OF A SYMPATHIZER and say I was moved to speak about the Northern Irish War. But in no play have I ever addressed a political event as such. My political sense derives from the past, and I view the present from the perspective of

the past, at least as I have constructed it, in imagination. So that in VICTORY I am acutely conscious of the collapse of a political ethic in my own time, but my sense is always that we have been here before.

CL: I seem to remember you reacted very strongly to the Falklands War and that you saw VICTORY as somehow reflecting your feelings about that episode?

HB: I was very astonished at the whole jingoistic atmosphere surrounding that and THE CASTLE reflects here and there the Falklands landscape - Krak talks about boys screaming on windy hills. But I never produced a Falklands play - in the reflexive sense. I watched the Falklands war with a sort of disbelief, the eruption of popular patriotism took me by surprise and I thought in any case, once the battle began we would lose it. I saw it militarily as another Gallipoli. But it turned out to be quite the opposite. The army won, the government did not fall, rather the Argentine military dictatorship fell. A curious residual imperialist episode became deeply significant.. The left still has not recovered from this, but the fact is, anything can be revived, and no sentiment is ever really defunct. A people contains in its psyche caverns of unplayed texts.

CL: What about DOWNCHILD?

HB: Yes, it's not specific atrocities or war but my political plays are always critical plays of social significance concerned with the broad pattern of events, with an ethos. DOWNCHILD was the last of a series of

plays about the betrayal of socialism - the corruption of socialism in the Labour Party. Actually it wasn't, because I went on to have a final hack in A PASSION IN SIX DAYS. But the interesting thing about DOWNCHILD and its investigations is that it hangs from a pastiche - it is a conflation of two unrelated events of the 1960s, the Lucan murder and the peculiar resignation of Wilson, in the form of an English country house thriller. I could only approach the inertia of the Labour Party through the most extreme invention.

CL: To have had a sense of betrayal, you must have believed. Did you believe in the Wilson governments?

HB: Well, I suppose I must have done, - otherwise I wouldn't have been affected so much. That seems naive now. PASSION IN SIX DAYS, which came after DOWNCHILD, is probably the play in which I articulate most clearly what I think is wrong with the Labour party as a party. It must debate the forms of social progress. Now, in projecting itself as a pillar of family life and domesticity, the Labour party has joined hands with the Tories. Glenys and Neil are now to become the archetypal domestic couple. If that's at the centre of the party there can be no possibilities of significant change. Perhaps the programme I wanted was in any case brutalist, crudely demolitionist. I expected a parliamentary party to embark upon a revolutionary programme, which shows a poor grasp of reality. I think I was groping towards not an economist criticism of English Labourism, but attempting to expose its intensely petit-bourgeois morality. This has peaked again in the person of Kinnock. But I won't be returning to the vomit.

CL: To return to CHEEK, it has been stated that this was written as a reaction to Bond's SAVED.

HB: SAVED was one of the first plays I ever saw in the theatre - and I myself was not a writer then. So I suppose that seeing the life of my own class and background could be represented on the stage made me want to write a play - and, perhaps, write it better. I do remember feeling that Bond's presentation of the South London Working class was abominable and contemptuous. The inarticulacy, the grunting and the monosyllabics, being accepted as a portrayal of working class people, did offend me and may have inspired me to write CHEEK which did lend articulacy to the characters. Laurie is quite adept verbally. So it could be seen as a reaction to the sterility of Bond's language.

CL: Even if it acted as a negative stimulus, presumably you did find it nevertheless a powerful experience?

HB: Yes, I must have done. But then again I remember being irritated by a number of things in that production. I remember that Gaskill intercut the scenes by flashing up advertisements That there had to be a relation between a commercially exploitative society and the depravity of those kids struck me as - not so. I couldn't connect with that connection. Though I was stimulated by seeing a theatre about people I was supposed to know, I wasn't moved to imitate it.

CL: Wasn't there anything you liked about it?

HB: Yes, the acting. Those actors...like Cranham, infected me with the sound of their voices. I'd never heard those accents before - certainly never played in front of an audience.But obviously I was impressed because both my friend and I went back to see THE NARROW ROAD TO THE DEEP NORTH so we must have been engaged by the play. I remember thinking that NARROW ROAD was much better. I very much liked the scene where one of the priests gets a pot stuck on his head. I don't know why I remember that. I just thought it was (laughs)....good.

CL: That was one of the plays where Bond began to move away from the kind of naturalism you get in SAVED into a more symbolic sort of representation.

HB: Yes, not knowing Brecht, I suppose I also found it rather exciting to see exotic places with Englishmen speaking colloquial English. Cockney monks provided a dislocation.I've never seen LEAR. I've not even read it, but I've liked his work less and less. For example, I thought THE FOOL was a very depressing form of literary biography.

CL: You have said in interview that you admired Charles Wood's DINGO. What did you find interesting about the play?

HB: Well, it's completely unnaturalistic. It's set in the kind of location which has always interested me - which, I suppose, are locations of catastrophe. In that particular case its set in the western desert during the war. It features in a very satirical way which then pleased me various political figures like Rommel. And also the

important thing for me about Charles Wood whom I still think is a very underrated writer is his joy in using English - speech,wit. That's reason why I'd rate a play like VETERANS which though deficient in content is brilliant in its language texture.

CL: When I read STRIPWELL and CLAW after reading CHEEK, I was quite surprised at what seemed to be a major move away from naturalism.In the interim you had written various unpublished satirical plays. Was this a conscious change of direction?

HB: Well, CHEEK was a Royal Court apprentice play par excellence and NOONE WAS SAVED is not dissimilar - neither of them political plays. After that I then wrote a short play about Edward Heath called EDWARD,THE FINAL DAYS and when I did that I got back to a kind of satirical writing that I used to produce as a schoolboy. I suddenly got back that instinct to be satirical and plunged straight into that. So after writing the Edward Heath play, I wrote ALPHA ALPHA which is a satirical play about the East End, the Kray brothers. Then I wrote CLAW and I was vaguely aware that I was getting on a helterskelter of satire and I wasn't being at all engaged with my characters. It was only with CLAW that I managed to drag myself back from what might have been a fatal precipice. The last act of CLAW which I still think is rather a fine piece of writing surmounts and overcomes the satirical emphasis of the previous two acts. So I was led off and recovered.

CL: Caricature was nevertheless important in the development of your own style. I feel that the influence of caricature is very apparent in all your later work. Though you have, in a way moved beyond caricature.

HB:I think most of my work is in some way rhetorical. A character speaks his mind and very publicly. There's very little unspoken text, nearly everything that is thought is spoken. The sense of caricature has been increasingly marginal, has been located in minor characters. In the centre of the plays complexity and contradiction have replaced it. Partly this reflects moves away from class stereotypes. My protagonists are, and have been, by and large intellectuals, artists, teachers, military geniuses, wives of intellectuals, and even Skinner, who is a peasant, is a witch and therefore owns knowledge. There are few Hackers or Billy McPhees now. In an age of populism, I am drawn not towards the dumb victims but the articulate explorers. Schweik would be a most inappropriate vessel of hope in an age like this, where knowledge is under attack and desire soon to be criminal.

CL: As a dramatist, you show a considerable interest in character. In left drama criticism, character has long been regarded as somewhat suspect - linked to ideas of bourgeois individualism. The broad tendency has been to regard the individual as a product of social circumstance, thereby demystifying the concept. By using it as such a definite reference point in your writing, aren't you encouraging reactionary thinking?

HB: The idea of expressing collectivity on the stage seems to me not really desirable. I regard the conventional left position on character and the individual as defunct and sabotaged, a limp rag. The individual as the product of deterministic historical and economic forces leaves serious art with nothing but stereotype and ideology, all dead rhetoric. The individual remains the only source of imaginative recreation of society, and is the proper subject for art, if not in life, and I don't pretend this is a realist intention, to make and remake itself, consciously in opposition to the repressive morality of the state or the party or the economic dispensation. I'm interested in the individual as the potential of many selves. We need to see self as a potential ground for renewal and not as something stale and socially made.

Characters create events through their own pain. THE CASTLE is very much about an event - it's about the construction of a building but the building is a manifestation of the alienation of the characters. If Stucley when he comes back from the Crusades had not found sexual despair then the castle wouldn't have been built. So the actual event is always in my work the outcome of conflict within the selves. I think in SAVED there is no form of resistance in those circumstances; whereas in my plays everyone always knows that intervention is possible and they call up forces within themselves which often fail but nevertheless respond creatively.

CL: In ignoring the socially determined view of the individual in your work, are you then rejecting the validity of this way of understanding

character or is it the case that you don't feel the need to present stage character in this way?

HB: Both. My characters sense the warping, shaping and distorting effect of society upon themselves and then they struggle against it. They define themselves and create themselves in resistance to forces. Take Hacker in THE LOVE OF A GOOD MAN: Hacker is part of bourgeois exploitation - he's a spiv; the war and capitalism provide him with an opportunity and he arrives at a certain point. But the play is not about the spectacle of Hacker dehumanised by capitalism; it is about Hacker discovering who he might be and therefore grappling with it,- to some extent defining himself in opposition to those forces. At the end of the play he learns a great deal about himself and turns against those individuals who in a Bond play would stand for authority. Although people are initially created by situations the trajectory of the play is about self-definition - about refusal.

CL: Isn't that rather close to a certain kind of bourgeois narrative in which the hero/heroine progresses from ignorance to self-knowledge?

HB: Is that a bourgeois narrative? It seems as much a socialist-realist narrative. But the difference is in the definition of self-improvement. In the bourgeois play the character is redeemed, he becomes socially viable. In the socialist-realist play he becomes ardent. In my work he constructs a self whose integrity is sealed against socialised lying, which corrupts the other two models.Often they're destroyed by what they discover. They do find a sense of self which they often don't possess at

all. But the plays are not improving; they're not meant reduce the audience to feeling if I work hard or concentrate more I will improve myself.

CL: Yet, in presenting characters who are extremely passionate and committed as forcibly and as impressively as they do - aren't they recommending passion and commitment to an audience?

HB: Yes, that does come across but the implication is not that they will therefore be happier. But certainly the possibility of self-change is there but not in the form that Brecht would propose it that this can only be achieved satisfactorily through a form of collective uprising.

CL: Is it your intention to represent character 'as it really is' on stage or is stage character in your work something quite apart from real people(who-ever they might be). Do they partake, for instance, of the nature of symbols?

HB: The main difference between them and observable people is, I suppose, that they are extremists. Under ordinary circumstances character remains unexplored, - unexposed; the nerves are quite concealed. But in order to force that exposure on the characters, I always set them within catastrophic situations. The characters on stage are not simply in unlikely situations but usually disastrous ones. Perhaps just in the aftermath of a disaster: I don't like the point of disaster itself but what occurs after it. THE EUROPEANSis about the siege of Vienna - specifically after the siege when the Turks and

Islamic conquerors have withdrawn and the Christian state has been saved. The play is about attempts to restore morality within that. But all my plays are like that: they're all about 'post-havoc'. I'm attracted to those circumstances because at times like that people are disorderly. They cease to be the predictable product of social forces - not simply workers or bourgeois or rentiers; they are dislocated from those classic roles by the social struggle.

The naturalistic and the Brechtian projects seem equally false to me. I neither believe in reproducing the voice and manner of the social person, nor in identifying the sources of self in economics, ideology etcetera, I am interested in character as speculation, the stage character makes no pretence at existent life, or rather he bounds over it, leading the audience into areas of fantasy and imagination - the possible becomes the definition of action and not the probable.

CL: Can we talk about narrative - perhaps the classical counterpoise to character. Here again, a lot of left criticism has stressed the importance of the story -(the influence of Brecht and Bond to point out two significant examples)- in that this lends itself to the presentation of the social dimension. It also faciliitates parable or fable. You have indicated a discontent with narrative and I've had the impression in plays like HANG OF THE GAOL and VICTORY that conventional narrative formats(the investigation, the quest) have been used merely as vehicles. I don't think you've treated the forms respectfully - giving due weight to suspense etc. Why are you suspicious of narrative?

HB: (LAUGHS) I think now I know why. I've always been contemptuous of narrative in the way that one is dismissive about what one can do well. I can tell stories rather efficiently but I was always slightly suspicious of that and I didn't know why. Living in this era now it is easier to understand why because narrative has clearly become the property of the establishment. It's interesting that you should say that the left view narrative as a means of exposing society's evils; the Thatcher era is an era of complete contradiction; we now find that narrative belongs in EASTENDERS, DYNASTY and the other soaps. So it's clearly been expropriated. If it ever did have the means of exposing social relations - as in Brecht - the situation has now been reversed. The epic novel that you can pick up on bookstalls, nine hundred pages long, by mimicking the attempt to expose in depth actually closes the mind of the reader. And therefore I suppose I now know one has an obligation to do without narrative in order to stimulate the audience.

CL: By narrative, I suppose we're talking about the action,- the linkage of events dominated by the structure of beginning, middle and ending - especially the ending. Brecht had a lot of difficulty with endings.

HB: I think everyone does. Good endings tend to be reconciliations. One squirms at the idea of a good ending. Take the end of VICTORY - which is well ended. It's a 'well-ended play'. The arrival of Ball and Bradshaw on stage together as two ends of a spectrum of defeat - one the republican and one the nationalist figure - both of whom have been betrayed by the system they felt affinity for, is actually an image of great reconciliation and reassurance - the notion that somehow, at the

end of the day the lion will lie down with the lamb. There's an element of sentimentality in that which I felt I needed. Of course it's one thing to say you're going to break narrative because you realise it's suspect and reactionary but it's quite another thing to know how to do it.?...interrupted consistently by prologues and interludes which in some sense reverse the meaning of the scene you've just witnessed - or offer alternative lies. It's getting to be a greater problem because audiences are less and less tolerant of interruptions because they're fed on narrative.

CL: One of the comments about CLAW you made in an interview which interested me emphasised the importance of setting up certain audience expectations and then disappointing these. You said you wanted the audience to begin by regarding the play as a conventional piece of agit-prop - but then suddenly it turns into something else. Also, in plays such as VICTORY and CRIMES, you employ stock farce situations like mistaken identity - after which things suddenly get serious again. Do you find the transitions difficult?

HB: I don't find transitions difficult. They're native to me. I see life in terms of contradictions and transitions. I've employed a lot in THE BITE OF THE NIGHT. There's one scene where an army officer who's seized power and is running a populist state, is suddenly picked up by one of his fellow officers who has no particular ambition to authority himself - picked up in his arms totally spontaneously. This man says he can't put him down - otherwise they'd all be back in the same society. There's a long scene when he carries him around and the passenger says well

you've got no ideas so you've got to put me down. It is actually a farcical situation. So that in a play which is actually bitterly cruel and sadistic about sexual things, politics is at that moment reduced to a very basic dilemma; it's one thing to act and another thing to fulfil the act. I don't think it should be difficult for actors. But I don't think actors are trained to understand those transitions at all - they're swoops. And obviously they do produce confusion in audiences but it's a good confusion for an audience to feel. I'm very interested in the laugh - what constitutes the valid laugh. I'm interested in making new kinds of laughs. I always have done that. There's that one which is untrustworthy - a laugh which makes you ashamed of having laughed.

CL: Do you feel that actors should signal these transitions fairly abruptly because there is a tendency to strive for continuity and consistency?

HB: The moment at which the audience is lost between two conventions has to be the crucial moment in which you have power. It's a momentary chance in a lifetime of bad art to actually suffer a creative dislocation. I think, in a sense, an unhappy audience is the one I aspire to - an audience that has not found its feet within the work.... than an audience that constantly knows where it is.

CL: In directing your plays, then, it would be advisable to look for these discontinuities and build the interpretation of the text around them?

HB: Yes. The actors obviously have to know when to let go of character consistency and to play reversals in their roles.

CL: Yet they tend naturally to do the opposite and positively strive for consistency of character - by 'ironing out' discrepancies.

HB: Yes, their whole training makes them do that. The question 'why do I do that at this point?' is a reflection of that kind of training. But it's quite difficult to answer that question sometimes - you 'do' it because you've changed - or something's changed you. I think that requires a sort of retraining.

CL: I'd like to talk about history. You disclaim that your history plays are history 'in the academic sense'. Yet you have studied history. You employ deliberate anachronisms. Is this because you regard history - in the way that Brecht regarded the theatre of naturalistic illusion - as being a form of deceit in that it attempts to conceal or suppress its most fundamental truth - that it is a form of literary fabrication?

HB: Yes, I suppose I do. I think history is an invention of both left and right. Both are equally false....When I go to East European countries I usually go to visit what they call a museum of the working class. And so I did in Prague - an enormous building in which no Czech ever sets foot; so I had it to myself. Having walked past enormous statues of Lenin which dominated a red-carpeted staircase, I then went into endless rooms of photographs, because the photograph is the icon of the artistic sections of the Communist authorities, - room after room

where people are being shot, hanged, executed, being killed in battles, or cheering their cosmonauts. You realise that the party itself has commandeered the masses by this means; the photograph itself celebrates the individual face but, at the same time, by enclosing it in mass cabinets, the masses are entrapped by the party which claims to speak for them. I find that illuminating for the theatre in that history is always about the extension of the individual and one or other political grouping annexes the idea of the individual for some ideological function. The good history play tries to rescue the individual from that annexation which is what I'm talking about in subtitling THE POWER OF THE DOG as MOMENTS FROM HISTORY AND ANTI-HISTORY. Anti-history is about people who try to resist that occupation.

CL: So you see history, then, as being a kind of narrative.

HB: Yes, it is a narrative. And I'm afraid I think the English liberal left's opposition to the two formal histories is itself a mirror image of those histories. What you get in our Labour party culture here is the story of Daisy Noakes, a housemaid; and there you have five hundred fairly illiterate pages of what it's like to be a housemaid. I see nothing to distinguish that from the biography of Lord Beaverbrook. It's counter - but its qualities are identical.

CL: You'd see history then as being inescapably concerned with the present?

HB: Yes. That's why we are in the process of writing plays about the civil war. Because our common cultural diktat here was that the Civil War was about romantic cavaliers oppressed by authoritarian puritans.....I wanted to approach that both from a vision of the defeat of the puritans and their own persecution at the hands of the other side and in the form of a woman too. So I'd reverse three things whilst, I'd hope, not producing a counter-cultural image of the English Civil War which is what a conventional left playwright would do.

CL: You mean something like THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN which Keith Dewhurst adapted from Christopher Hill's book?

HB: Yes, it's what they would call the hidden side of history. In fact it's not hidden at all; it's just not exposed by this regime.It's there and that play simply reproduced the story of the diggers. What Bradshaw does is both to be the reverse of the historical model and to subvert it as she goes along: she liberates herself from her own husband's influence.

CL: History, then, is a particular form of oppression which exploits the individual?

HB: The leading woman character in THE EUROPEAN has been raped, maimed and made pregnant by the Turks during the war and at the beginning of the play she tells the story of her maiming to the Christian bishops enquiry into atrocities. So she narrates what has happened to her - and quite unashamedly - so the state has a record. But the expectation on

the part of the government is that she will leave it at that. She refuses to do so and says 'I am about to give birth - but I will do this in public - in front of an audience.' The more she refuses to allow her own suffering to be subsumed within history, the more unpleasant she becomes to the regime. Even though they are Christians themselves who might have milked her for anti-Islamic propaganda, they also want her to lie down and, in a way, that goes back to the museum: 'You've paid a terrible price for being part of history but now your suffering is not narrative.' If you refuse that, as she does consistently, you therefore disrupt that programme.

I believe the experience of history is an experience of pain, the words are interchangeable. Just as the individual in the years following trauma, likes to recall the trauma, so does society insist on reproducing its dislocations, but always in a laundered way which invokes necessity ('the struggle' is a word much beloved of the left. It has lost its meaning become stripped of its pain, and cloaked in anodyne romanticism) and anaesthetises memory. The individual is robbed of his experience of agony by being forced into a participation he could not at the time recognise, in other words, he is re-individualised. This returns me to the emphasis I place on the individual as the centre of all resistance. Solzhenitsyn tells us that the most successful resisters in Stalin's camps were the religious, when they must have been persistently battered by a conventional wisdom that told them religion was a comic characteristic of pre-civilisation.

CL: This is consistent with your focus on the individual. Perhaps extending out of that, there seems to me to be in your work a curious but persistent loyalty to the dead. To give some examples - in FAIR SLAUGHTER Gocher's loyalty to Communism is inseparably linked to his loyalty to the dead Tovarish whose hand he carries round in a bottle. In THAT GOOD BETWEEN US you endow a murdered, tortured corpse with speech to communicate with the torturer's daughter. THE LOVE OF A GOOD MAN is of course permeated with concern for the dead - the battlefield seance springs to mind. In VICTORY, Bradshaw's quest is motivated through loyalty to a dead man. In THE POWER OF THE DOG, there is the issue of Ilona's dead sister and at the end of DOWNCHILD, the hero's last words express his love for a dead defector. Can you comment?

HB: I don't know if I can. All that you say is true.

CL: Do you think it's important?

HB: I think it's terribly important.

The dead are the mute victims of this plundered agony. They receive nothing but the title of 'the sacrificed' to whom an entirely spurious respect is shown on specified occasions, the falseness of which is well articulated by Bride in LOVE OF A GOOD MAN. They are of course, wrongly perceived as innocent, or as victims, but whatever their reality, they are the most expropriated by the successor regimes, and much hatred and mischief is invoked on their behalf. In fact an ugly struggle goes on over the dead. They beckon to the living, because their 'sacrifice'

(which it never is) is employed to justify further 'sacrifice'. They are forever calling more people 'over'.

CL: Linking this with what we've said about history, is it a question of giving the ultimate victims of history the voice which has been denied them.

HB: The most significant revival of the dead occurs in DON'T EXAGGERATE. Do you know it - the narrative poem?

CL: Yes. That was what made me aware of the significance of this particular conception.

HB: In that case it's the voice for someone who has suffered not only in his own life but also, in being revived and given an intense level of articulacy, actually plays with the living..... And so he plays the a-historicity of his own existence to the audience.

CL: Bond, after writing what he called a series of'question plays', accepted the responsibility to provide 'answer plays'. You view Marxism as yet another form of oppressive, historical myth, what do you replace it with?

HB: I'm against messages. As far as answers go, perhaps it's necessary to resist the questions. After I finished THE BITE OF THE NIGHT, I wrote a series of ten short plays called THE POSSIBILITIES. Given that all persuasion lies in one direction at any particular time, there is still

within the individual the power to resist that direction. In each of these plays, very compelling reasons why, for example, you should not do something, are shown to be resistible - the possibility of not being persuaded by a compelling argument, since argument - logic - has now become a lever.

CL: Isn't logic, however, intrinsic to language - the technology of writing, if you like?

HB: Yes. Logic may be intrinsic to language, but is not intrinsic to poetry, which is the method of my writing. I suppose these plays celebrate emotional resistance - spontaneity whatever the consequences. I can't think of a theatre of answers at all. I'm not sure I believe in dramatist's responsibility.

CL: What about NO END OF BLAME - where the cartoonist hero accepts the verdict of the Soviet Writers and Artists Union that his anti-NEP cartoon was irresponsible? Would you go along with that attitude?

HB: No. That play....it's the only play I've written which has a tangible and conventional hero. And though it's subtitled SCENES OF OVERCOMING some of the things he overcomes are his own sense of self. For example in that scene, he thinks something passionately but he represses it in the interests of the overriding definition of the people's interests as defined by that committee. I think that's wrong and I don't regard that as a good form of overcoming. Your individual

consciousness as a writer cannot be compromised with a commitment to something which you can't actually see.

CL: Have you felt the lack of large-scale financial commitment to your work?

HB: Yes. I think the best production of my work I've ever seen was not done in England but in Finland; a large theatre committed six months of its rehearsal time to doing THE LOVE OF A GOOD MAN on a massive scale. The huge non-naturalistic set was the first to allow the entrances to work. I saw THE POWER OF THE DOG in which the entrances are crucial - because you can't have Stalin appear casually - being done in a studio space. I mean by this that the casualness, the banality of his personality, is a point made theatrically by its counterpointing with his office, his costume, his ostensible power, in other words, his entrance.

CL: Studio spaces have problems in presenting the emotional impact of that kind of power which demands huge dimensions.

HB: What you get by putting big plays in a small space is a frisson of imagination. 'This is a space which is meant to signify the Battle of Agincourt if you're prepared to make that effort.' But I think it demands too much of an audience who have the right to experience a play without having to keep imagining space and scale. But I'm certainly unhappy that so many of my plays have been refused the scale of production they require. That's a vicious circle too because if they're

not put on the big stage, at a certain level, they fail and therefore they don't get the level of audiences they would have got if they'd been put on in the right space in the first place.

CL: In this country, I suppose the largest productions of your work would have been at the Royal Court?

HB: Yes, leaving aside Sheffield Crucible's production of A PASSION IN SIX DAYS which was on the main stage and therefore big. The conference scenes did work well, because Glossop designed those conventional elements of the party conference such as the speaker's stand and the podium on which the party members sit on a scale which was greater than life - which got a properly epic element into that.

CL: Being deprived of main auditorium space is a common complaint amongst contemporary dramatists.

HB: Yes. Mind you not many contemporary dramatists really write epic plays. When Brenton talks about wanting to play on the Steinway, he's not actually filling the space. When I saw WEAPONS OF HAPPINESS, two characters were talking and a tank appears; and you go - 'Oh, a real tank!' But that's not what epic theatre is; it's not getting all the junk on that he could have if it was real. When I saw Edgar's MAYDAYS at the Barbican, a street scene during the battle of Budapest when people rushed across with flags and a bit of smoke drifted about was not really necessary. You only have the scale when the thing commands the scale. You don't fill it with dross in order to create pseudo-cinema. But I

think my claim to the bigger space is based not just on the fact that most of my scenes happen outdoors and in big spaces but that the language itself is rhetorical and epic. And because people speak speeches they need space. I don't get that so one's continually telling actors to pipe down.

CL: With regard to the rhetoric, isn't it necessary for actors to counteract the text to an extent?

HB: Yes, that's absolutely right.

CL: You have said that you feel there are subtexts in your work and surely a complete surrender to surface rhetoric isn't going to bring these out?

HB: What happens often in a speech of mine is that a character plays one line thought which is then subverted by another line of thought; then he drops that and returns to the first line. So that within one speech, someone is labouring possibly with two completely conflicting ideas - such as pity and violence. A line might go 'If I could get my hands around your throat, I would certainly kill you!' And then - 'Oh God, I'm so miserable!'

CL: Couldn't you have the actor say 'If I could get my hands around your throat, etc ' and act'Oh God, I'm so miserable!'?

HB: Yes, you could. That's a lot to ask and it's not my style to do that. That would be a subtext. I think with that rhetorical thing - maybe it's not rhetorical - perhaps we should find another word for it - the way it develops is that the characters often feel that they themselves are performing. They don't just say what's true, they say something which they know will create an effect on some of the other characters on stage. The character performs to himself and then to others. It's complicated.

CL: I find that interesting.Do you know Fitzgerald's definition of personality at the beginning of THE GREAT GATSBY where he says personality can be defined as 'an unbroken series of successful gestures'? That definition has always seemed to me to be what many of your characters are aiming at. I wondered whether you saw your characters as striving for that kind of completeness?

HB: People trying to create themselves? Yes, I do feel that the character gives a performance that he then proceeds to subvert. So that they pre-empt other characters' right to judge them. The character says - 'I know myself, - my qualities. So don't think you can accuse me because I already know that.' That's the way a lot of the political figures negotiate.

CL: Do you think that impenetrability (in Hare's KNUCKLE the hero talks about his merchant banker father as having a personality like a pebble - smooth - no cracks - no way in - no point of vulnerablity) - is sustained indefinitely?

HB: No, because they can't really do it. It would be a fault if they really were impermeable. But they attempt it because they can't resist the power of their own emotions or their own pain.

CL: So we should see these 'performances' founder?

HB: You see the performance attempt and the failure. And the reason the performances are put up is because people need carapaces in order to endure what history has imposed on them within the play. This girl in THE EUROPEANS who's been raped, plays complete absorption and a complete understanding of her situation. She continually plays self-knowledge but as the play progresses this is continually demolished.

CL: This suggests, with its interiority and exteriority, that an actor could approach certain parts at least from a naturalistic point of view? The Stanislavski approach to character.

HB: Yes. I suppose that's so.

CL: Concerning layers of 'performance', I particularly enjoyed directing those scenes in FAIR SLAUGHTER after the escape from prison where Old Gocher has to keep up a continual ambiguity about the journey back to the USSR - pretending or perhaps believing that they're in the steppes when they're only a few miles south of London.

HB:... For the benefit of his friend who needs to think that he can make it. That's a double bluff isn't it?

CL: Gocher thinks Leary needs to think that he can make it - the mirroring goes on to infinity. And it also plays with the ambiguities of the staging - the scenery is only visible through the dialogue. It's very funny and at the same time very moving.

APPENDIX 2. From Stanislavsky's 'Creating A Role'

Translated by E.R. Hapgood. Methuen 1981.

A. Supplement to *Creating a Role*

A Plan of Work

1. *Tell* the story of the plot (in not too much detail).

2. *Play the external plot* in terms of physical actions. For example: enter a room. But since you cannot enter unless you know where you came from, where you are going and why, seek out the external facts of the plot to give you a basis for physical actions. This should all be in rough form and constitutes the justification of an outline of *given circumstances* (just rough, external ones). Actions are drawn from the play; what is lacking is invented in line with the spirit of the play: What would I do if here, today, this very minute, I found myself in the situation analogous to that of the plot?

3. *Act out improvisations dealing with the past and the future* (the present occurs on the stage): Where did I come from, where am I going, what happened between the times I was on the stage?

4. *Tell the story* (in greater detail) of the physical actions of the plot of the play. Produce subtler, more detailed, more profoundly based proposed circumstances and "magic if."

5. *Draft a temporary definition*, in approximate terms, and *rough outline* of the superobjective.

6. On the basis of the acquired material shape a rough, approximate *line of through action*, always saying: What would I do "if . . . ?"

7. For that purpose break up the play into *large, physical units* (there is no play without these large physical units, large physical actions).

8. *Execute* (act out) these roughly sketched physical actions based on the question: What would I do "if . . . ?"

9. If the larger units are too difficult to encompass, *break them up temporarily into medium-sized units, or even, if necessary, into smaller and smaller units. Study the nature of these physical actions.* Adhere strictly to

the *logic* and *consecutiveness* of the large units and their component parts and combine them in whole large actions, always without props.

10. *Shape a logical, consecutive line of organic, physical actions.* Write it down and fix it firmly by frequent repetition. Clear it of all superfluity—cut ninety-five percent! Go over it until it reaches the stage of being true enough to be believed in. The logic and consecutiveness of these physical actions will lead to *truthfulness* and *faith*. But this is achieved by being logical and consistent, not by trying to achieve truth for the sake of truth.

11. Logic, consecutiveness, truth, faith, set in the state of being "here, today, this very minute," is now further grounded and fixed.

12. All this taken together produces the state of "I am."

13. When you have achieved the "I am" you will also have arrived at *organic nature* and its subconscious.

14. Up to now you have been using your own words. Now you have the *first reading of the text.* Seize on the separate words and phrases which you feel the need of; write them down and add them to your own free text.

When you come to the second and later readings, take down more notes, cull more words to be included in your own invented text of your parts. Thus gradually with small bits and then whole phrases your role becomes supplied with the playwright's own words. The blanks are soon filled in with the actual text of the play according to its style, language, and diction.

15. Study the text, fix it in your minds, but avoid saying it aloud so as not to jabber mechanically or build up a series of word acrobatics. Repeat many times and fix firmly your line of logical, consecutive physical actions, truth, faith, "I am," organic truth, and the subconscious. By giving these actions a basis of justification you will find always fresh, new, subtler given circumstances coming into your mind and a more profound, broad, all-embracing sense of concerted action. As you do this work, go over and over in constantly increasing detail the contents of the play. Imperceptibly you will acquire a basis for your physical actions which is psychologically more subtle because of your proposed circumstances, the through line of action, and your superobjective.

16. Continue to act the play along the lines now set. Think about the words, but when you act, replace them with *rhythmic syllables* (tra-la-la-la).

17. The true inner pattern of the play has now been laid down by the process of justifying your physical actions. Fix it even more firmly, so that the spoken text will remain subordinate to it and not be jabbered mechanically and independently from it. Continue to act the play using rhythmic syllables. *Go over in your own words* (1) the pattern of thought,

(2) the pattern of visualization of the play; (3) explain them both to those playing opposite you in order to establish intercommunication with them and also a pattern of *inner action.* These basic patterns form the subtext of your role. *Ground them as firmly as possible and maintain them constantly.*

18. After this pattern has been fixed, while you are still sitting around the table, *read the play in the author's own words, and without moving even your hands, convey as accurately as you can to those playing opposite you the patterns worked out, the actions, all the details of the score of the play.*

19. *Do the same thing, still sitting around the table but with your hands and bodies free, using some of the business blocked out for provisional production.*

20. *Repeat the same on the stage with the business as blocked out provisionally.*

21. *Work out and fix the plan of the stage sets (inside four walls).* Each person to be asked: Where would he choose (in what setting) to be and to act? Let each one suggest his own plan. The plan for the sets will be taken from the consensus of the plans proposed by the actors.

22. Work out and record the stage business. Set the stage according to the agreed plan and introduce the actors into it. Ask the actors where they would choose to make a declaration of love; where they would choose to work on the person playing opposite to engage in a heart-to-heart talk, and so forth; where it would be more convenient to cross over in order to hide some embarrassment? Let the actors cross and carry out their physical actions as required by the play—hunt for books on the bookshelves, open windows, light a fire, and so forth.

23. *Test the pattern of the stage business by opening arbitrarily any one of the four walls.*

24. Sit down at a table and carry on a series of conversations concerning the literary, political, artistic, and other aspects of the play.

25. *Characterization.* All that has been done so far has achieved inner characterization. Meantime the external characterization should have appeared of its own accord. But what is to be done if this does not occur? You should go over what has already been established but add a game leg, terse or drawling speech, certain attitudes of arms or legs, position of the body in keeping with certain mannerisms, habits. If the external characterization does not appear spontaneously, it must be grafted on from the outside.

APPENDIX 3. From 'The Stanislavsky Technique Russia' by Mel Gordon.
Applause Theatre Book Publishers. 1987.

The term Physical Actions appeared as early as 1916 and was referred to again during the twenties and early thirties. But in 1935 it began to acquire a new meaning. The Method of Physical Actions was intended to be a correlative to the slow motion rehearsal process normally associated with the Stanislavsky System. Without relying on their memories, imaginative powers, or analytical abilities, actors were compelled by the director to decide which Physical Actions they would execute in the Given Circumstances of the play. Only that which could be physically performed and seen by an audience was allowed. Therefore, a character in love could not be acted merely through feeling; a Physical Action had to express it.

Although it appeared to be a purely directorial device—actors were not even informed by the director of the play's intentions and themes until a few days before opening night—in fact, the Method of Physical Actions equally distributed creative responsibilities for the production between the performers and the director. No more could the actor remain passive, waiting for cues and corrections from the omniscient director with his holy prompt book; nor was the director at the mercy of self-inspired performers. The Method of Physical Actions was predicated on a simple discovery that Stanislavsky borrowed from Michael Chekhov and Vakhtangov's followers (who, in turn, were influenced by Meyerhold): all physical action is psychophysical. This means that internal feeling and character identification could be stimulated by pure movement, action, and rhythm.

The Plan of the Method of Physical Actions

In an undated transcription, probably from 1936, Stanislavsky outlined a twenty-five step plan for the director (and indirectly for the performer) incorporating the Method of Physical Actions in the rehearsal process. [A translation of this scheme, although somewhat confused in style, appears in Stanislavsky's *Creating a Role* (NY, 1961).] Below are the directorial steps of the Method of Physical Actions:

1. In the simplest terms, explain the plot of the play to the actors. But do not let them read the play until later.
2. Using the basic Given Circumstances to inspire the actors personally, let them act out the Actions.
3. Let the actors improvise the past and future of the characters.
4. Explain the play's plotline with more details, furnishing more Circumstances and inspiring more "Magic Ifs."
5. Roughly outline the play's Super-Objectives.
6. Have the actors create a personalized Through-Action.
7. Break down the play into large physical Units and Actions.

8. Have the actors perform the Physical Actions with a "Magic If."

9. Still without props, the actors—if necessary—should break the Physical Actions into smaller Units, keeping the logic and continuity of the larger blocks.

10. Through repetition, firmly shape the Physical Actions so they have a logic and believability for the actors.

11. Fix the logic and believability so the actors feel as if the events could actually happen now, at this very minute.

12. Create an active state of "I am" ("It is happening to me") in the improvisation.

13. Each actor now should have absorbed his character's psychology into his own subconscious mind.

14. Let the actors read the play for the first time.

15. As each actor studies the text, have him justify his Actions within the Given Circumstances of the play.

16. Let the actors perform the play, but in place of the dialogue have them practice with the nonsense words "Tra-la-la."

17. The actors should now fix the spoken text within their justified Actions. While they continue to speak "Tra-la-la," ask them to verbalize in their own words the

characters' thoughts. Each actor should inform his partners of his internal monologue. The actors must also visualize the scenic environment.

18. Seated around the table, the actors should now read the playscript to each other. At the same time, but without moving, they should attempt to convey their Physical Actions.

19. This time, moving only their heads and hands to demonstrate their activities, the actors read the play again at the table.

20. Using only rough blocking, have the actors read their parts on the stage.

21. Let the actors discuss their ideas for the mise-en-scène.

22. Explain the actual stage setting. Then let the actors find the appropriate places for their actions.

23. Using any of the four walls as the proscenium arch, test out different stage plans.

24. Discuss the social, political, and artistic meanings of the play.

25. Give the actors any external information—such as habitual gestures and mannerisms—that they have not discovered on their own for their characters.

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APPENDIX FOUR

SOME NOTES ON SEDUCTION FOR 'THE WRESTLING SCHOOL'

(What seduction theory seeks to do is to provide a focus for actors and directors in their thinking about performance; it is a counterbalance to rationalism which seeks to negate the action of seduction.)

Forget truth

Acting is neither true nor false

Acting is seduction

Not simulation but dissimulation

Some non-definitive definitions:

> To seduce is to divert the other from his/her/its truth
>
> 'To seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion It is to be taken in by one's own illusion and move in an enchanted world.' Baudrillard.SEDUCTION.p.69.

Perhaps the first person an actor/actress needs to seduce is him/herself. The audience is seduced by my self-seduction; the seduction of the audienc seduces me - circles.

To seduce him/herself, the actor must discover the Other in him/herself, because only the Other can seduce us.

It is not a matter of achieving REALITY or of verisimilitude so that the audience will believe. The crucial thing is to find the lure that will mak them ***want*** to believe.

To attempt seduction is to put one's own identity - one's sense of self - into play. It's risky.

Truth is about control and being in CONTROL.

Truth is about IDENTITY and SAME.

Truth is about PROPRIETY and the PROPER(REALITY,AUTHENTICITY,PRESENCE,THE CONCRETE,THE ORIGIN, THE END,DEFINITION,DETERMINATION, ESSENCE, THE MEANIN etc.)

Seduction evades Truth and seeks only the mastery of appearances.

TRUTH is rooted in the past. 'Truth - the past thought - is always the death (relieved, erected, buried, unveiled, unbandaged) of what it is the truth of.' Derrida:GLAS.p.32.

SEDUCTION only occurs and can only be known in the present. It is never acceptable to say simply - 'I was seduced/I seduced' - as if that were the end of the matter. Once the event is past we can and must impose a truth.

Too many people have come to think of theatre exclusively in terms of rationality - the structures and laws that govern the REAL WORLD. We are swathed in a media blanket which is dedicated to filtering the irrational - to such an extent that it is difficult for us to recognise the irrational any more. Yet in order to reason it is necessary not only to recognise but to confront the irrational. The Stanislavski system focusses the actor on this rationality through its insistence on structures of 'objectives' and that action should be 'logical and connected.' Similarly its promotion of emotional essences 'rationalises' and filters the more potentially disruptive elements of our emotional life; the raw emotion is to be refined and mediated by reflection. It is as if somehow one is required to snatch affective fragments from the interface of human relations, drawing them deep into the carapace of the self where they can be transmuted into extensions of that self's IDENTITY - far away from their intrinsic, superficial logic. [1]

Seduction is about relinquishing control: it is situated somewhere between control and chaos. It is to live on that interface, that surface.

Seduction is about difference and THE OTHER whom we can never ever grasp or comprehend or control or reduce to THE SAME (i.e. to REALITY, ESSENCE, PRESENCE, ORIGIN, THE MEANING etc.)

Seduction is the art of the irrational: it dominates the so-called 'real' world and its potency is apprehended(dimly and degradedly) by politicians and advertisers - two groups much despised by rationalists who lay the most plausible claim to the world by dint of logic. However, the seduction used by politicians and advertisers is weak, crude and vulgarised because it is prostituted in the interests of control. As Baudrillard says, it is what is left of seduction when all the stakes have been withdrawn.

Rationalists comprehend the world teleologically: a thing is grasped through an analysis of its function (What is it for? What was its cause?) In seduction, an end can be seen as a means to a means.

In an age of universal simulation, all that is left to the performer is dissimulation....?

THE PROCESSES OF SEDUCTION

1. **The challenge** - 'inaugurates a kind of mad relation, quite different from communication and exchange; a dual relation transacted by meaningless signs, but connected by a fundamental rule, and its secret observance. The

challenge terminates all contracts, all exchanges regulated by law (the law of nature or the law of value) and substitutes for it a highly conventional and ritualized pact. An unremitting obligation to respond and outdo, governed by a fundamental rule of the game, and proceeding according to its own rhythm.' Baudrillard. SELECTED WRITINGS.p.161.

The response to a challenge is an escalated challenge - and so on...

The excitement and the energy arise out of this process - from the openness of the possibilities and the risk. One derives tremendous spiritual energy from the rejection of 'the law': through seduction dead weight can be transformed into energy.

This is a form of energy which cannot be brought under the control of the law or of capital.

'Nothing exists naturally, things exist because challenged and because summoned to respond to that challenge. It is by being challenged that the powers of the world including the gods are aroused.' Baudrillard. SEDUCTION.p.91

2. **Reversal**. The normal 'logical' subject/object relation is suspended. Causality can be reversed. 'There is no active or passive in seduction, no subject or object, or even interior or exterior: it plays on both sides of the border with no border separating the sides.'Baudrillard.SELECTED WRITINGS.p.160.

Weakness therefore can become a 'strength'. One never seduces through strong powers alone. Good seducers know how to use their weakness, their pain, their death:

> *I am so drawn to you I feel sick. The man who suffers. The man who's lost. Success appalls me but pain I love.(ANNE in THE CASTLE)*

To seduce the other, one must be seduced oneself. There is the nineteenth century cliche of the 'vile seducer'. According to this view, the seducer is in complete control while the seduced is merely a helpless victim. This corresponds to social ideas concerning the inferiority and subjection of women. The form of seduction we are discussing here derives its excitement and its energy from an awareness of mutuality: both partners are seduced. One cannot seduce unless one is prepared to be seduced. Don Giovannis and Lulus may wreak seductive havoc but they do not reduce their victims to their control - they themselves are out of control, in the grip of an obsession?

3. Thinking becomes labyrinthine - not linear; speculative and reflective - not clarified and defined. Baudrillard argues that seduction always operates between the two poles of strategy and instinct which mask a single form.

4. One must understand how THE SECRET and THE MEANINGLESS **operate**. Rationalism dismisses the latter and reduces the former to its hidden

content. The secret operates like a black hole - it exercises a kind of gravitational pull.

5. **Drift.** 'In the last analysis I do nothing that does not have some interest in seducing you, in setting you astray from yourself in order to set you on the way toward me, uniquely - nevertheless you do not know who you are nor to whom precisely I am addressing myself. But there is only you in the world.'(Derrida.'The Post Card') This is the writer to his reader; is the performer attempting the same thing with the audience?

6. **Aiming off.** Unlike conventional goal-oriented behaviour, seduction tends to achieve one thing by aiming at the other. One seduces by feigning indifference. One digresses. Seduces the one in order to seduce the other. The actor feigns indifference to the audience. The comedian appears indifferent to the laughter he provokes.

7. **Vertigo/spin.** In Pinter's THE CARETAKER, one of the characters snatches a bag from the tramp, Aston, and gives it to his brother; Aston snatches it back from the brother; Mick snatches it again and the process is repeated faster. Eventually the protagonists reverse the process because the momentum of the game has taken over and the external law of reality has been superseded. This shows how seduction erupts into the real with the structure of a game which has....

8. **Rules** and **Rituals.** These deliver us from the tyranny of meaning, the law of meaning and the meaning of the law. Failure to observe the rule returns us to the domain of the law. These rules create implicit obligations, however; one basic one is that the game must continue whatever the cost. The basic assumption behind the game is that chance does not exist - everything is destiny.

THE LAW	RULES
Universal	Particular
Natural	Artificial
Linear	Cyclical
Finite	Infinite
Transcendant	Immanent
Irreversible	Reversible
Disenchanted	Enchanted
Etc.	Etc....

9. Avoiding Seduction. In fact, most of us spend most of our effort on **not** being seduced. Hysterics are terrified at the possibility of seduction. There is a price to be paid, however: to appear unseducible is to render oneself incapable of seduction - the impotence of self-control.

10. None of this seeks to dethrone logic. But logic has absolutist pretensions. When we are enmeshed in reason, we blind ourselves to the operations of the irrational. We have to live with both - reason and the irrational, reality and fantasy, truth and seduction.

THE ABJECT

Seduction is associated with pleasure. Its opposite, associated with pain, is violence. In this situation, the subject, instead of putting his/her identity pleasurably into play, has this sense of self violated; they are compelled to become an object for the other. This painful loss of self between subject and object is ABJECT. However, the reversal process still applies and ABJECTION can turn into pleasurable SEDUCTION.

In the drama, Seduction must be a crucial process if not *the* crucial process: it is interpersonal action which is not governed by external rules. Behaviour which accords with the law and socially accepted norms is not per se dramatic. (And not especially interesting.)

In particular, those who import sociological/political/psychological/ biological underpinnings violate and negate the essential dramatic form. The drama does not require authorisation by any power discourse; indeed one of its functions, (insofar as it may be said to have any function,) is to challenge such discourses.

COMEDY

Comedy needs to be treated with the greatest suspicion. In our time, it has become an index of our dehumanisation; in popular entertainment it rages like a fever. It has become axiomatic that - 'you have to laugh'; laughter is somehow seen as 'healthy', morally right and, under some circumstances, even heroic. Why does one have to laugh? Why should laughter be healthy? Bergson -

> 'The comic can produce its shock only on condition that it brush the surface of a quite calm, quite simple soul. *Laughter has no greater enemy than emotion.*' Le Rire.
>
> 'The comic demands, then, in order to produce its full effect, something like a momentary anaesthesia of the heart.' Le Rire.

Laughter is perforce social. It defers to social attitudes and functions most effectively in groups.

> 'Our laughter is always the laughter of a group.' Le Rire.
>
> 'Whoever isolates himself is exposed to ridicule, because the comic is composed, in large measure, of this very isolation. This explains why the comic is so often dependent on the customs, the ideas - to speak plainly, on the prejudices of a society.' Le Rire.

It is symptomatic of the mechanical view of human behaviour which has come to dominate the thinking of our time -

> 'The art of the vaudeville writer perhaps being to show us a visibly mechanical articulation of human events, all the

while preserving the outward aspect of probability, that is to say, the apparent elasticity of life....' Le Rire.

In seduction, any laughter is strange and uncertain.

THE APPEARANCES OF SEDUCTION

'Only signs without referents, empty, senseless, absurd and elliptical signs absorb us.' Baudrillard.SEDUCTION.p.74.

'Seduction lies with the annulment of the signs, of their meaning, with their pure appearance.' Baudrillard.SEDUCTION.p.76

The seduction of the eyes is the most immediate and purest form of seduction. It is the moment of most pure duality. When eyes meet, however public, the moment is absolutely private. In the midst of noise - silence, in the heart of the crowd - secrecy. In mirth - gravity, in gravity - mirth. This reversal energises the moment and gives it its charm. Eyes love irony.

'Systems fascinate by their esotericism, which preserves them from external logics.' Baudrillard.SEDUCTION.p77. A common acting trick is to invent a secret for one's character: something the audience could never guess and would be surprised were they to discover.

'The attraction of the void lies at the basis of seduction. 'Baudrillard. SEDUCTION.p.77.

Seduction is only present in the form of a flickering - like a pulsing star. Its sole strategy is to be there/not be there. One of the founding laws of classical logic(and therefore of 'reality') is the law of non-contradiction: something cannot simultaneously both be the case and not be the case. (This is asserted from Aristotle to Russell). In spite of this, we all know that the law violates our experience. Seduction contradicts the law of non-contradiction.

Is this perhaps the essence of the actor's seductive power? he/she is both present and not present; actors are simultaneously themselves and not themselves; the emotion is felt and not felt etc. Actors need to foster and multiply the ambiguities of performance.

Acceptance of this ambiguity disposes of that sterile old Stanislavskian conundrum: does the actor *become* the character? Can he say *'I am* Othello'? The question implies an absolute and logical universe. The actor both *is* and *is not* the character.

Seductive Exercise 1. This is your secret: you know that someone else holds the secret which is the key to your whole life; this could be anything - something which might superficially appear quite trivial. You must find the person and wrest the secret from them. You will only ever succeed in doing this secretly, - without them or anyone else realising.

Seductive Exercise 2. Tell a 'true'story about yourself which will strongly engage the sympathy of a listener; this can be factual or bluff or both.

'Great stars never dazzle because of their talent or intelligence, but because of their absence.'Baudrillard.SEDUCTION.p96.

A good seducer knows how to let signs hang.....

NOTES

1. 'Both physical and psychological objectives must be bound together by a certain inner tie, by consecutiveness, gradualness, and logic of feeling. It sometimes happens that in the logic of human feelings one will find something illogical; after all in the harmony of music there are occasional dissonances. But on the stage it is necessary to be consecutive and logical. You cannot step from the first floor in a house to the tenth. it is impossible with one inner movement or one physical movement to do away with all obstacles and immediately persuade another person to do something, or to fly from one house to another. You must go through and carry out a whole series of consecutive and logical physical and simple psychological objectives.' Stanislavski: CREATING A ROLE. (Methuen.) P.55.

> *The Stanislavskian emphasis on a complete structure of 'objectives' insists on and foregrounds the dimension of control. A psychology constantly dominated by objectives is, by definition, non-seductive because it reduces all experience to the status of an object and refuses to respect or engage with the essential alterity of the Other. The following example Stanislavski cites of such a structure ('the Score of a Role' pp.56-60) is striking in its tone of self-absorption.*

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Charles Lamb 1991

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